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Country image refers to the holistic image that consumers harbor toward a particular country. Traditionally, one brand was thought to possess a single country image; an Italian brand would theoretically be owned by an Italian company and manufacture its products in Italy. However, due to increasingly common practices of cross-border merger and acquisition (M&A) and offshoring practices, most brands today can have multiple country images for a single branded item, which include the decomposed labels of country-of-brand origin (COB), country-of-company (COC), and country-of-manufacturing (COM). Due to cross-border M&A and offshoring, the COC or COM can shift from its home country to another country in two different directions: downward (a high fashion image country → a low fashion image country) and upward (a low fashion image country → a high fashion image country).

When consumers are exposed to the information that the COC or COM of a brand actually differs from its COB, what reactions will appear in consumers' minds? How do such reactions affect consumers' brand evaluations? Do such effects differ between luxury brands and mass market brands or between the downward and upward shifts of country images? To address these questions, this study examined the effects of discrepancies in country image on consumers' perceived brand credibility and prestige in the fashion industry context, examining both luxury and mass market brands and both downward and upward scenarios of M&A/offshoring. The moderating role of consumers' clothing product involvement was also tested. Using research gained from literature

review, a total of twenty hypotheses (H1a-H9h) were developed based upon two specific theories. Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory suggests that when consumers encounter discrepancies in country image, they will modify their brand evaluations to liberate themselves from the resulting cognitive dissonance. Homans's (1958) social exchange theory suggests that the impact of discrepant country images, however, would be significant for luxury brands but not for mass market brands, due to consumers' differing levels of input with regard to each brand purchase.

For hypotheses testing, 426 college students were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental studies (Study 1 – Study 4), which collectively manipulated eight scenarios: luxury/mass market brand (2) x downward/upward (2) x M&A/offshoring cases (2). Italy and China were selected to represent high and low fashion image countries respectively, and the images of four fictitious brands (Italian/Chinese luxury/mass market brands) were developed through pre-tests and used in the experiments. In the experiments, *changes* in the participants' perceived brand credibility and prestige *before* and *after* the manipulation of the scenarios were examined using repeated-measure ANOVA. The results of the data analyses provided support for six of the twenty hypotheses. The downward shifts in the COC/COM manipulated by M&A and offshoring scenarios significantly decreased the brand credibility and prestige of luxury brands (H1a, H1b, H5a, H5b supported). However, the downward shifts in the COC/COM also decreased mass market brands' credibility, thus refuting H3 and H7. The upward shifts of the COC/COM through M&A and offshoring did not significantly increase brand credibility and prestige, neither for luxury brands (H2a, H2b, H6a, H6b

not supported) nor for mass market brands (H4 and H8 supported). Consumers' clothing product involvement did not exhibit a significant moderating effect in the experiments (H9a-H9h not supported).

These findings suggest that consumers generally act in negative ways toward downward shifts in country image, regardless of brand tiers. Moreover, upward shifts in country image—for instance, the acquisition by a foreign company from a high fashion image country or the manufacturing of products in a high fashion image country—cannot by themselves improve the original image of brands from a low fashion image country, regardless of brand tiers. These patterns were common to all consumers, with no significant difference based on their individual involvement with clothes. These findings provide empirical evidence regarding whether cognitive dissonance theory or social exchange theory can explain the phenomena of country image effects. In addition, these findings fill gaps in the country image literature by examining the impact of country image shifts in both downward and upward directions, while also comparing the impact across brand tiers by focusing on brand-level outcomes (i.e., brand credibility and prestige). It also suggests managerial implications, such as the development of communication strategies for fashion brands that minimize downward shifts in country image. Limitations for the study and suggestions for future studies are also discussed.

SINGLE BRAND WITH MULTIPLE COUNTRY IMAGES: THE EFFECT OF
DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN COUNTRY IMAGES ON
BRAND CREDIBILITY AND PRESTIGE

by

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知之者不如好之者, 好之者不如樂之者.

The one who knows it is not better than the one who likes it, and the one who likes it is not better than the one who enjoys it.

————— *Confucius (B.C. 551-479).*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, over ten cases of cross-border M&A contracts were made in the global fashion industry (see Table 1). Reputable European designer brands, such as Valentino, Sonia Rykiel, and FILA, have been acquired by foreign companies in Asia and have thereby obtained new owner countries that differ from their home countries (Weiteng, 2015). Such market practices suggest that brands may experience a *transition* between country images, which can substantially impact brand reputations and transform brand images in the minds of consumers (Chung, Youn, & Lee, 2014; Lee & Lee, 2011; Lee, Lee, & Wu, 2011). For instance, after being acquired by a Chinese company through cross-border M&A, Volvo invested tremendous marketing expenses into protecting its “Swedish premium” image among consumers and minimizing its potential image transformation into a Chinese brand (Leung & Yang, 2015). Likewise, MCM—a fashion accessories brand—continued portraying itself as a “global brand with German heritage,” rather than revealing its new South Korean owner (Marriott, 2014). Indeed, managing the effects of country image shifts on brand image after M&A proved challenging for many.

As these examples demonstrate above, country image shifts due to cross-border M&A or offshoring practices can impact brand images significantly (Chung et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2011; Lee et al., 2011). Therefore, it is important for brands to understand how such country image shifts would specifically impact and change brand images while

Table 1

Recent Cases of Cross-Border Fashion Brand M&As

<i>Brand Name</i>	<i>Country-of-Brand Origin (COB)</i>	<i>Acquiring Company/Country of Acquirer</i>	<i>Year</i>
Pal Zileri	Italy	Mayhoola/Qatar	2014
Mambo	Australia	Saban Brands Lifestyle Group/United States	2014
Qeelin	China	Kering/France	2014
Franco Vago	Italy	Nippon Express/Japan	2013
Harry Winston	United States	Swatch Group/Switzerland	2013
St. John's	United States	Fosun Group/China	2013
Caruso	Italy	Fosun Group/China	2013
Nicholas Kirkwood	United Kingdom	LVMH/France	2013
Sandro, Maje	France	KKR/United States	2013
Sonia Rykiel	France	Fung Brands/Hong Kong, China	2012
Valentino	Italy	Mayhoola/Qatar	2012
Folli Follie	Greece	Fosun Group/China	2011
FILA	Italy	FILA Korea/South Korea	2007
MCM	Germany	Sungjoo Group/South Korea	2005

Source: Combined from Intrepid (2015), Kotra (2015), Weiteng (2015), Wendlandt (2014).

investigates these impacts regarding cross-border M&A and offshoring, since these marketing practices in particular have been suggested to result in country image shifts (Chung et al., 2014; Ha-Brookshire, 2012; Lee & Lee, 2011). A cross-border M&A refers to an M&A contract that occurs between enterprises from different countries, which causes the corporate owner's country of the brand (*country-of-company; COC*) to relocate from the home country (*country-of-brand origin; COB*) to another (Kang & Johansson, 2000). Offshoring is a business strategy that transfers production, manufacturing, or another value-chain activity from the home country (COB) to foreign countries (*country-of-manufacturing; COM*) (Cavusgil, Knight, Riesenberger, Rammal, & Rose, 2014). For example, in the Valentino scenario described in Table 1, the Italian brand was acquired by a Qatari company while also manufacturing its products in China; thus, this brand comprises three different country images, with Italy as COB, Qatar as COC, and China as COM. Although previous researchers have posited that these mixed and decomposed country images can substantially change consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward the brand (Chung et al., 2014; Ha-Brookshire, 2012; Lee & Lee, 2011), empirical evidence is still lacking in the literature, especially in the context of fashion industry in which cross-border M&A and offshoring have become increasingly common (Chung et al., 2014; Ha-Brookshire, 2012; Rivoli, 2014).

In this regard, the purpose of this experimental study is to examine the effects of multiple country images on consumers' perceived brand credibility and prestige in the context of fashion brands. Specifically, this study examines the cases wherein the COC and COM become different from the COB, due to cross-border M&A and offshoring at

both the luxury brand and mass-market brand tiers. In the following chapter, the concepts and theories relevant to this study's purpose are briefly introduced: country image, Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, Homans's social exchange theory, brand credibility, brand prestige, and clothing product involvement. In addition, research gaps are identified, and research objectives are developed to address these gaps. Subsequently, the significance and limitations of the study are discussed, with explanations of key terminologies and an outline of the dissertation.

Background

This section introduces the concepts, market trends, and theories that need to be understood in order to discuss the topic of multiple country images in the context of fashion brands.

Country Image

Decomposition of Country Image

Country image refers to the overall beliefs held by consumers toward a particular country's various features, such as economics, society, people, and products (Josiassen, Lukas, Whitwell, & Assaf, 2013). Traditionally, only a single country was associated with a brand; the country where the brand originated from the country owned the brand and produced the brand's products within the country (Nagashima, 1970). For the past fifty-year-long history of the country image research, researchers have studied how this single origin country image impacts on consumers' perception toward the brands and products from the country (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999).

However, today's globalized market environments are challenging the traditional notion of one brand being confined to a single country image. These challenges have become especially noticeable in the fashion industry, which stands at the center of globalization. As Table 1 showed earlier, cross-border M&A—in particular, cross-border acquisition—is becoming increasingly popular in the global fashion industry: for instance, Valentino was acquired by a Qatari company and St. John's was acquired by a Chinese company (Weiteng, 2015; Wendlandt, 2014). Such cross-border M&A contracts shift the country-of-company (COC), thereby creating a discrepancy between the country-of-brand origin (COB) and the COC. The decomposition of the origin country also occurs as a result of fashion brands' common offshoring practices, which shift the country-of-manufacturing (COM) and thereby create a discrepancy between the COB and COM. For example, one out of every three clothing items sold in the United States is made in China (American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA), 2012). In this case, while these apparel products retain their American brand labels, they are technically “made in China”; thus, two country images, US as COB and China as COM, coexist in the apparel items.

Downward and Upward Transitions of Country Image

In cross-border M&A and offshoring practices, the transition of country image can occur in two different directions: *downward* and *upward*. In the aforementioned cross-border M&A cases of Valentino and St. John's, for example, the Qatari and Chinese companies likely aimed to acquire the well-built brand image and heritage of these Western-originated brands, which arise primarily from positive images associated with

“Italian” or “American” products. In this dissertation, these cases are termed as *downward cross-border M&As*, in which ownership of a brand moves from a high fashion image country (e.g., Italy) to a low fashion image country (e.g., Qatar) through the cross-border M&A contract.

However, the process may also occur in the opposite direction, with a renowned Western fashion company’s M&A of a lesser-known brand. For instance, a French renowned fashion group Kering bought a Chinese jewelry brand named Qeelin in 2014, and another French fashion group, LVMH, bought a relatively unknown British designer brand called Nicholas Kirkwood (Weiteng, 2015). In these cases, the companies sought strategic development through the acquisition of relatively unknown brands from abroad, thereby extending their brand portfolios and increasing market shares in foreign markets (Weiteng, 2015). In contrast to the downward cross-border M&A, these cases are referred to in this study as *upward cross-border M&As*, in which the ownership of the brand shifts from low fashion image countries (e.g., China) to high fashion image countries (e.g., France). In short, a downward cross-border M&A occurs from a high fashion image country to low fashion image while an upward M&A happens from a low fashion image country to a high fashion image country. Figure 1 describes such difference between downward and upward transitions of country image through M&A.

Another cross-country business practice, offshoring also happens in both downward and upward directions. The common strategy of offshoring is toward the downward direction, as production activities (e.g., cutting, sewing, dyeing, etc.) of most fashion brands is performed in developing countries that do not have high fashion

Figure 1

Downward/Upward Cross-border M&A and Offshoring Cases

Case	COB		COC	Example
Downward Cross-border M&A	High Fashion Image Country (e.g. Italy)	→	Low Fashion Image Country (e.g. Qatar)	e.g. Valentino acquired by Qatari company
Upward Cross-border M&A	Low Fashion Image Country (e.g. China)	→	High Fashion Image Country (e.g. France)	e.g. Queelin acquired by French company
Case	COB		COM	Example
Downward Offshoring	High Fashion Image Country (e.g. Italy)	→	Low Fashion Image Country (e.g. China)	e.g. Valentino outsourcing from China
Upward Offshoring	Low Fashion Image Country (e.g. China)	→	High Fashion Image Country (e.g. France)	e.g. A Chinese brand outsourcing from Italy

Source: Developed by the author

Note. COB = Country-of-brand origin, COC = Country-of-company, COM = Country-of-manufacturing

country image, but have lower production costs (Rivoli, 2014). The former example of American brands outsourcing products from China is such *downward offshoring case*. However, the opposite direction, an *upward offshoring*, is also being made. For example, some fashion brands in emerging countries such as China outsource all or part of their manufacturing in Italy—even though the products are actually made by Chinese laborers working in Italian factories—in order to take the advantage of the “made in Italy” image (Thomas, 2007). As Figure 1 describes, the downward offshoring moves the country-of-manufacturing (COM) from a high fashion image country to a low fashion image country and, contrarily, the upward offshoring moves COM from a low fashion image country up to a high fashion image country.

Festinger’s Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The cognitive dissonance theory suggested by Festinger (1957) explains that when people are exposed to the juxtaposition of cognitive elements that are inconsistent or contradicting each other, it arouses psychological discomfort called cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). As a result of cognitive dissonance, Festinger (1957) posited that people are motivated to reduce this dissonance to relieve psychological discomfort, such as by changing their attitude toward an object (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance theory has been applied widely in consumer research, for instance in examining consumers’ post-purchase coping strategies (e.g., self-rationalization that reduces dissonance between pre-purchase expectation and post-purchase satisfaction with the product) (e.g., Anderson, 1973; Chatzidakis, Smith, & Hibbert, 2009; Cohen & Goldberg, 1970).

The decomposed labels of COB, COC, and COM serve also as inconsistent cognitive elements; thus, they also can provoke cognitive dissonance. However, limited attempts have been made to apply cognitive dissonance theory to the examination of consumer reactions to incongruent country images. Connecting cognitive dissonance theory to the effect of discrepancies in country image would provide theoretical explanations of whether/why consumers modify their attitudes toward a brand when they are exposed to inconsistent country image information.

Homans's Social Exchange Theory

Homans's social exchange theory (1958) posits that people are reasonable actors who act based on the compensation between inputs and outputs in social interactions. That is, once a person puts time and commitment into a social encounter, he/she expects a fair amount of reward—such as a favor, product, or satisfaction—from the other party of the interaction (Adams, 1965). The theory has popularly been applied in research examining consumers' service expectations and perceived price fairness (e.g., Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999; Homburg, Hoyer, & Koschate, 2005; Sierra & McQuitty, 2005). The common assumption of previous researchers was that as consumers spend more money, they are likely to expect more from the products/services in terms of quality and benefits (Smith et al., 1999; Homburg et al., 2005; Sierra & McQuitty, 2005).

Social exchange theory may provide explanations of whether/why consumers exhibit differing levels of expectation toward consistency in country image information based on brand tiers; that is, whether consumers react similarly or differently toward discrepant country images of luxury brands and mass market brands. However, despite

the theory's popularity in other contexts (e.g., Smith et al., 1999; Homburg et al., 2005), limited attempts have been made to utilize social exchange theory when comparing consumer reactions to country images by brand tiers.

Brand Credibility, Brand Prestige, and Clothing Product Involvement

Brand credibility refers to the believability of the product information contained in a brand, which requires consumers' perceptions of the brand to have the ability (i.e., expertise) and willingness (i.e., trustworthiness) to continuously deliver what has been promised (Erdem & Swait, 2004). Brand credibility is likely enhanced by the consistency and clarity of product information (Baek, Kim, & Yu, 2010; Erdem, Swait, & Louviere, 2002; Roberts & Urban, 1988), which suggests that brand credibility could be substantially affected by consistency/inconsistency among the country images of a brand.

Brand prestige is the relatively high status that can be associated with a brand, often built by the inherent worth, unique know-how, or luxurious image of the particular brand (Hwang & Hyun, 2012). Both brand credibility and brand prestige are found to provide competitive advantages for brands, especially by increasing consumers' perceived brand values and purchase intentions (Baek et al., 2010; Erdem & Swait, 2004; Hwang & Hyun, 2012).

Clothing product involvement indicates the perceived relevance, interest, and importance of clothing products to the self (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). Clothing product involvement is found to correlate significantly with consumers' attitudes and behaviors related to clothes in literature. As a result, consumers with high levels of clothing product involvement are more likely to recognize details and values of clothing

products than those with low levels (Kim, 2005; O’Cass, 2004). A clothing brand’s country image information could also be perceived differently based on an individual consumer’s level of clothing product involvement.

Despite the potential relevance of these three concepts—brand credibility, brand prestige, and clothing product involvement—and their connections to decomposed country images, these relationships have not been clearly examined in the literature. The next section, statement of research gaps, will discuss these gaps in more detail.

Statement of Research Gaps

In the extant research of aforementioned market trends, theories, and concepts, the following six research gaps are identified. First, the current trends and complexity of country image have not sufficiently been explored in the general fashion industry context. Although the fashion industry is highly affected by globalization trends with many cross-border M&A and offshoring cases taking place (see Table 1), research on fashion brands and products is still likely to remain focused on the old notions about country-of-origin, which study the product images of particular countries and a single country where the product is made. Moreover, in the general country image literature, the fashion industry has often been neglected, as most studies are focused on manufacturing industries, such as automobiles and electronics, which have comprised the major product categories of international trade in the past. Because the fashion industry is a highly globalized industry in which multiple countries are complicatedly involved in the production of one branded product, investigating the complex effects of country image in the fashion brand context will be worthwhile to study.

Second, the exploration of potential discrepancies between multiple country images associated with one brand/product and their impact on consumers' reactions toward the brand is generally lacking within country image literature as well as within fashion studies. Many researchers emphasize that most products in today's market are hybrid products produced multi-nationally (Brodowsky, 1998; Chao, 1993; Hamzaoui-Essoussi & Merunka, 2007), which implies that one branded product can have different countries as its COB, COC, and COM. With this fragmented country images, can we still discuss the country image effect based on the traditional formula of one brand-one country? How do today's consumers accept such "decomposed" country images in on brand, and how do such "discrepancies" between the multiple country images comparably or collectively affect shaping the brand image? Yet, the existing research provides limited answers to these questions. Previous researchers have viewed these multiple countries as a collective set of product attributes composing the overall image/quality of the product, utilizing product attribute theories, rather than focusing on the discrepancy, incongruity, or conflict between country images and their impact on brands that might be explained by cognitive dissonance theory.

Third, cross-border M&A and offshoring can occur in both downward and upward directions, as seen in Figure 1. However, in explorations cross-border M&A and offshoring and their impact on a brand's country image, there is little comprehensive consideration of both downward and upward cases within extant research. Thus far, only downward cases have been discussed, in which a brand from a high fashion image country (i.e., Italy) is acquired by a foreign investor from a low fashion image country

(i.e., China) (Chung et al., 2014). This tendency might be related to the predominant focus on country image research regarding brands/products from developed/industrialized countries. Consequently, our understanding with regard to relatively unknown brands/products from emerging countries is less known (e.g., Agarwal & Sikri, 1996; Laroche, Papadopoulos, Heslop, & Murali, 2005; Nagashima, 1970). Even though downward cross-border M&A or offshoring cases might be a little more known to the public, upward cases are also observed, in which Chinese brands are acquired by French companies (see Figure 1). Yet, little attention has been paid to the upward cases, though consideration of both upward and downward cases will be necessary for a thorough understanding of the impact of cross-border M&A and offshoring on the fashion industry.

The fourth research gap lies in the consideration of brand tiers while studying the consequences of cross-border M&A and offshoring to fashion brands. Cross-border M&A and offshoring can happen among brands of all brand tiers, from luxury brands (e.g., Valentino outsourcing from China) to mass market brands (e.g., Gap outsourcing from China). However, very few relevant studies have been conducted focusing only on the luxury brand context (e.g., Chung et al., 2014). Whether or not the impact of cross-border M&A and offshoring affects the country images of mass market brands in a manner similar to or different from luxury brands has yet to be discovered, particularly in the application of a theory explaining why consumers behave differently by brand tiers. In this study, social exchange theory will be employed to explain how the impact of differing country images varies by brand tier.

The fifth research gap pertains to relevant dependent variables in studying the consequences of cross-border M&A and offshoring on fashion brands. Considering that consistency and clarity in product information are significant determinants of brand credibility and prestige (Baek et al., 2010), discrepancies across COB, COC, and COM resulting from cross-border M&A or offshoring might have substantial effects on the credibility and prestige of fashion brands. Furthermore, both brand credibility and brand prestige are found to determine many important brand assets, such as brand values, perceived product quality, consumer satisfaction, and purchase intentions of the brand (Aaker, 1991; Baek et al., 2010; Erdem & Swait, 1998; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Nonetheless, the potential impact of discrepancies in country images among the COB, COC, and COM on brand credibility and prestige is hardly discussed in the literature.

Lastly, the sixth research gap concerns potential moderating variables. Since individual consumers' different levels of interest in fashion brands substantially influence their attitudes and behaviors regarding fashion brands (Kim, 2005; O'Cass, 2004), these individual interests (e.g., clothing product involvement) may influence their perceptions about country images of fashion brands. However, yet limited variables have been explored as potential moderators in studying the relationship between country image and consumers' brand perceptions.

Research Objectives

With these research gaps in mind, the overall purpose of this study is to examine the impact of discrepancies between the images of multiple countries in a fashion brand—particularly resulting from cross-border M&A and offshoring practices—on

consumers' perception toward brand credibility and brand prestige. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to address the following four research questions through a series of experimental studies.

The first research question of this study is: *how do discrepancies between the images of COB and COC affect consumers' perception of the brand?* This study examines consumers' reactions when the country-of-brand origin (COB) and the country-of-company (COC) are different due to fashion brand cross-border M&A. When consumers are exposed to the information that a fashion brand (e.g., Valentino) from a high fashion image country (i.e., Italy) is now owned by a company from a low fashion image country (i.e., Qatar), how do they react to such change, and how does that reaction influence their perception toward the brand? Based on Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, this study argues that such discrepancies between country images can engender cognitive dissonance among consumers. Because cognitive dissonance arouses psychological discomfort (Festinger, 1957), consumers may be motivated to modify their attitudes toward the brand to reduce their psychological discomfort. Based on this, this study aims to examine the effect of discrepancy between COB and COC on consumers' perceived brand credibility and prestige. Further, since cross-border M&A can happen in two directions – downward M&A and upward M&A (see Figure 1) – both cases will be examined.

The second research question of this study is: *how do discrepancies between the images of COB and COM affect consumers' perception of the brand?* This study investigates consumers' reactions when the country-of-brand origin (COB) and the

country-of-manufacturing (COM) differ due to offshoring, and how these reactions influence their perception regarding the brand. Because of offshoring practices, the country where the brand's products are manufactured (COM) often differs from the country where the brand originated (COB). For example, French branded items (COB = France) manufactured in China (COM = China) may create cognitive dissonance among consumers due to the disparate country images of the COB and COM. Similarly to the aforementioned discrepancy between COB and COC, consumers may also be motivated to modify their perception toward the brand to release themselves from the discomfort of such dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Specifically, like Research Question 1, the effect of discrepancies between the images of COB and COM on consumers' perceived brand credibility and prestige will be examined for both downward and upward offshoring cases.

The third research question of this study is: *do discrepancies between the images of multiple countries associated with a brand provide the same degree of influence for both luxury brands and mass market brands?* This question pertains to whether the effect of discrepancy between country images on brand credibility and prestige varies by brand tiers. Discrepancies among COB, COC, and COM may affect consumers' perception of the brand. Here, the social exchange theory suggests that consumers tend to have different levels of perception and expectation toward luxury brands and toward mass market brands (Smith et al., 1999; Homans, 1958; Homburg et al., 2005; Sierra & McQuitty, 2005). Thus, it is questionable whether consumers put importance on country images across brand tiers and whether they give the same degree of importance to the

country images of luxury brands and mass market brands. Considering these points, this study posits that the effect of discrepancies in country images on consumers' brand perceptions will be different across brand tiers (i.e., luxury versus mass market brands).

The fourth research question of this study is: *does every consumer consider country images to the same degree? Do consumers' clothing product involvement levels have an impact?* The potential effect of discrepancies among COB, COC, and COM on consumers' brand perceptions may differ by individual consumer, namely by their clothing product involvement levels. If levels of personal interest, inputs, and attention regarding clothing-related decisions differ by individual, one's sensitivity and reaction toward the fashion brands' country images could also vary among people. Thus, this study aims to examine the moderating effect of consumers' clothing product involvement on the relationship between country image discrepancies, brand credibility, and prestige. In other words, this study will examine whether the effects of discrepancies between the images of COB, COC, and COM of fashion brands on brand credibility and prestige are stronger or weaker based on individual consumers' clothing product involvement levels.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study can provide significant contributions to both academics and industry practitioners. First, as one of the initial attempts to examine the comprehensive country image concept and the multiple countries that are associated with a fashion brand at different layers, this study will advance our overall knowledge about the role of country image on fashion brands. Beyond the simple country-of-origin concept that only describes the "product images" of certain countries, this study will

reveal how consumers' general perceptions of the diverse aspects of a particular country affect their perception of a fashion brand from that country. In addition, by specifying and examining multiple countries as the COB, COC, and COM of fashion brands, these findings will demonstrate how each country associated with one fashion brand is perceived differently by consumers and which country image is more/less influential on the images of fashion brands. This will therefore help fashion industry practitioners understand the consequences of their cross-border M&A and offshoring strategies, by investigating customers' reactions toward discrepancies in country images that result from such practices. With this understanding, practitioners will be able to develop appropriate brand management strategies—for instance, by emphasizing the country among the COB, COC, and COM that has the most positive country image.

Second, this study examines consumers' cognitive and affective reactions toward disparate country images that might affect their brand perceptions: cognitive dissonance. Although there have been studies on hybrid/multinational products that have differing COB, COC, and COM, most studies have focused on how these country images comprise a collective set of product cues based on product attribute theories, rather than focusing on potential conflicts and discrepancies that these multiple country images can arouse in consumers' minds (Brodowsky, 1998; Chao, 1993; Hamzaoui-Essoussi & Merunka, 2007; Ha-Brookshire, 2012). Based on cognitive dissonance theory, this study is one of the earliest attempts to examine clearly the arousal of cognitive dissonance in consumers' minds due to differing country images of the COB, COM and COC of one brand, as well as the subsequent influence of such dissonance on brand perceptions. With this approach,

this study will provide theoretical explanations of why the same brand with different COB, COC and COM can create different brand perceptions by arousing cognitive dissonance in consumers' minds.

Third, this study considers two brand tiers (luxury brands and mass market brands) in comparing the effect of discrepancies between country images, based on social exchange theory. This approach is rather unique because there are few considerations of both brand tiers, especially with the application of social exchange theory, in studies of country image. By exploring whether consumers' reactions toward discrepancies in country image are similar or different among fashion brand tiers, this study will extend our understanding of the effect of country image across brand tiers, as well as how social exchange theory can explain that phenomenon. Findings will also provide managerial implications to both luxury brand marketers and mass market brand marketers, with regard to whether these brand tiers should manage country image in the same way or in different ways.

Fourth, departing from previous research focused on product-level outcomes (e.g., Chao 1993; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Ha-Brookshire, 2012), this study focuses on the effect of discrepancies in country image on brand-level dependent variables, thereby providing practical implications for brand management. Differing from manufacturing industries such as automobiles and electronics on which previous researchers have focused (e.g., Han, 1989; Lee & Ganesh, 1999; Knight & Calantone, 2000), the fashion industry is a highly brand-oriented business, where brand-level assets and images are especially critical in marketing (Okonkwo, 2007). In addition, although product-level research

findings are subject to limited applicability since other product attributes that influence consumer perception differ by product, brand-level findings can be applied across different products under the same brand. Thus, our findings about the effect of discrepancies in country image on brand credibility and brand prestige will provide useful implications for brand managers in developing their post-M&A or offshoring brand management strategies that can be applied to the overall brand.

Lastly, by examining a potential moderating variable that is relevant to the effect of country image on consumers' brand perceptions (i.e., clothing product involvement), the findings of this study can add knowledge about potential moderating variables to the country image literature. Furthermore, this will provide brand practitioners with suggestions, such as whether the impact of discrepancies in COB, COC, and COM on brand credibility and prestige are found to be similar or different among customers.

Limitations of the Study

Based on the research objectives stated above, we limit the focus of this study in terms of the following. First, this study employs an experimental research method that only examines the effect of manipulating a stimulus on selected variables within a constrained setting (Malhotra, 2010). The purpose of experimental research is to test the causal effect between stimuli and dependent variables in a purposely designed setting, wherein other potential variables are controlled to the minimum level (Malhotra, 2010). As such, this study is only focused on how discrepancies between country images affect brand credibility and brand prestige in a constrained setting in which all other potential variables are controlled. In reality, there are other situational factors that might yield

different results from our findings. For this reason, the results of this study will be subject to the general limitations of experimental research.

Second, also relevant to its experimental design, this study selects only two countries of high/low fashion images, two brand tiers (i.e., luxury versus mass market brands), and college students from selected university in a single country (i.e., United States) for the experiments. Therefore, the findings of this study are subject to the general limitations of such sampling techniques. Any generalization of findings into the contexts of other countries, brand tiers, or populations should be approached with caution.

Third, this study only focuses on the brand-level outcomes of discrepancies in country images of fashion brands, not product-level outcomes that are common in previous studies. Measuring product-level outcomes such as perceived product quality and price may require specification of a particular product category, since consumers' evaluation criteria might significantly differ by product categories even within one brand (e.g., t-shirt versus dress versus coat). For this reason, this study limits its context to examining the relationship between brand-level causes (i.e., brand M&A and offshoring) and brand-level outcomes (i.e., brand credibility and prestige), in order to avoid potential intervening effects of product categories.

Fourth, this study only examines the moderating role of clothing product involvement in the relationship between discrepancies across country images, brand credibility, and prestige. Although there can be other personal and situational variables that might influence consumer behaviors regarding country image, this study limits its consideration to clothing product involvement.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Country Image** refers to the overall beliefs that consumers hold toward the multiple facets of a particular country, such as the country's economics, people, and products, which may subsequently influence the perception of products from that country (Josiassen et al., 2013).
- **Country-of-Brand Origin (COB)** refers to the country in which a brand originated and/or where the brand's heritage is located. For example, Italy is the COB of Valentino, since the brand was first launched in Italy.
- **Country-of-Company (COC)** refers to the country in which the ownership of a brand is located (Li, Murray, & Scott, 2000). For instance, due to the cross-border M&A contract between Valentino and a Qatari company known as Mayhoola, the COC of Valentino is currently Qatar, since the corporate ownership of the brand is in Qatar (Wendlandt, 2014).
- **Country-of-Manufacturing (COM)** refers to the country in which the products of a brand are made, often identified on the product tag with a *made-in* label. In the case of Valentino products produced in factories located in China, the COM is China.
- **High/Low Fashion Image Country:** Previous researchers have explained that country image is specific to product categories. A country can boast a superior image in one product category while having an inferior image in another product category (e.g., French fashion products may be preferred, but French automobiles may not be preferred) (Josiassen et al., 2013; Roth & Romeo, 1992). Thus, a high fashion image country is a country with high preference, prestige, and reputation in the fashion

category among consumers—examples include Italy or France. A low fashion image country is a country that lacks this high reputation for fashion brands—examples include China or other emerging countries.

- **Cross-Border M&A (Merger and Acquisition):** M&A (Merger and Acquisition) occurs when an operating enterprise acquires control over the whole or a part of the business of another enterprise (Kang & Johansson, 2000). Specifically, cross-border M&A refers to M&As that take place between firms of different national origin or home countries (Kang & Johansson, 2000).
- **Downward Cross-Border M&As** are cases in which a brand from a high fashion image country is acquired by a low fashion image country. The Italian luxury brand Valentino (i.e., COB = Italy) acquired by a Qatari company (i.e., COC moved to Qatari) is an example of such a case (Wendlandt, 2014).
- **Upward Cross-Border M&As** are cases in which a brand from a low fashion country image is acquired by a high fashion image country. The Chinese jewelry brand Qeelin (i.e., COB = China) that was acquired by a French firm (i.e., COC moved to France) can be an example of this (Weiteng, 2015).
- **Offshoring** refers to the relocation of production, manufacturing, or other value-chain activities to locations abroad (Cavusgil et al., 2014). In the fashion industry, offshoring often indicates the outsourcing of the production process (e.g., sewing, cutting, dyeing, etc.) for apparel and accessories from overseas.
- **Downward Offshoring** occurs when a brand from a high fashion image country is manufactured in a low fashion image country, mostly for the purpose of cost-

minimization. European and American branded apparel that are manufactured in China is an example of this case.

- **Upward Offshoring** occurs when a brand from a low fashion image country is manufactured in a high fashion image country. A Chinese brand that outsources its production in Italy to improve product images with a “made-in Italy” label can be an example.
- **Cognitive Dissonance Theory** explains that when one is exposed to the juxtaposition of two cognitive elements that are inconsistent with each other, thus engendering psychological discomfort in the one’s mind (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance arouses the motivation to release oneself from the discomfort resulting from such dissonance; therefore, people i) change their attitudes toward one of the cognitive elements, and/or ii) ignore or avoid the information that causes dissonance as part of a coping strategy (Festinger, 1957). In this dissertation, it is assumed that discrepancies between the images of multiple countries that are associated with a fashion brand cause cognitive dissonance among consumers.
- **Social Exchange Theory** proposed by Homans (1958) explains that people calculate the compensation between the inputs they make (e.g., time, effort, money, etc.) and the outputs they receive (e.g., favor, product, service, etc.) in social interactions, and expect to gain just amounts of output compared to input (Homans, 1958). Based on social exchange theory, in this dissertation it is assumed that consumers tend to have a higher level of expectation toward luxury brands than toward mass market brands because luxury brands require greater input for purchase (e.g., price).

- **Luxury Brands** indicate a tier of brands specializing in selective and exclusive products and services, often providing rare, desirable attributes and sophisticated tastes to target customers (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008). A fashion brand, Valentino, a watch brand, Rolex, and an automobile brand, Maserati, are the examples.
- **Mass Market Brands:** Mass market products or brands are made to be sold to as many as people possible, often with affordable prices and non-customized designs that are appropriate for mass production (Cambridge Dictionary, 2016). Mass market brands can be defined in contrast to luxury brands, particularly in terms of their target markets and brand concepts. Examples include Old Navy, an apparel brand, and McDonald's, a food chain.
- **Brand Credibility** is defined as “the perceived believability of whether a brand has the ability and willingness to continuously deliver what has been promised” (Baek et al., 2010, p. 662; Erdem & Swait, 2004).
- **Brand Prestige** comprises the perceived value of a brand, defined as “the relatively high status of product positioning associated with a brand” (Baek et al., 2010, p. 663; Steenkamp, Batra, & Alden, 2003).
- **Clothing Product Involvement:** Zaichkowsky (1985, p. 342) defines involvement as “a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Haws, 2011). Clothing product involvement refers to a consumer's perceived connection to clothing products, including his/her interest in, valuation of, and self-expression through clothes (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006).

Dissertation Outline

This dissertation comprises five chapters. Chapter One raises the issue of cross-border M&A and offshoring practices that present challenges to the traditional paradigm of country image, while also introducing major concepts and theories that prove relevant to the subject. Based on this discussion, research gaps and objectives are identified, and the study's significance and limitations are explained, followed by definitions of key terminologies. In Chapter Two, an extensive review of relevant literature is provided. Previous studies related to country image, cognitive dissonance theory, social exchange theory, brand credibility, brand prestige, and clothing product involvement are evaluated. Based on this review, twenty research hypotheses are developed, building a conceptual framework for the study. In Chapter Three, the study's methodology is explained. Following a description of the overall research design, the designs of four experimental studies are explained, along with the stimuli, scenarios, and testing variables used in each study. Chapter Four provides the findings of these experimental studies, explicating the results of testing the twenty hypotheses. Lastly, Chapter Five offers the study's conclusions. A summary of findings and results from each of the four experiments are placed into conversation with existing research and theories. In addition, the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings, the study's limitations, and suggestions for future studies are also provided to conclude Chapter Five.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the major concepts and theories that are relevant to this study are reviewed. First, the concept and general literature of country image are reviewed, followed by specific country image studies that are focused on the fashion industry context. Second, two theories that provide theoretical bases for the study—Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory and Homans’ social exchange theory—are reviewed. Third, the review of three major concepts that are examined in this study—brand credibility, brand prestige, and clothing product involvement—are provided. Based on the literature review, a total of twenty hypotheses are developed with the conceptual framework of study, and the rationale for each hypothesis is explained.

Country Image

The State-of-the-Art of Country Image Research

Concept

Since Schooler (1965) first suggested the impact of origin country images on forming product biases, research on country image and related topics has developed into a history spanning fifty years (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). Table 2 summarizes the major studies of country image, including the concepts used in each study. First, research on country image began from the concept of country-of-origin, which indicates the manufacturing country where the product is “made in” (Nagashima, 1970). Before

globalization, this country-of-origin concept simply indicated a single country where the product was “made in,” by associating the product-country as “Ford from the United States” or “Toyota from Japan” (Han, 1989). In the country-of-origin era, the meaning of country image was rather limited to the image of the “products” made in a particular country (Nagashima, 1970). For example, Nagashima (1970) viewed country image as consumers’ beliefs about a particular country’s product attributes, such as price, value, and quality (Nagashima, 1970). Han (1989) also defined country image as the generalized belief about the overall quality of the country’s products (i.e., either good or bad).

However, in later research conducted from 1980-1990s, researchers began understanding country image as a more general image toward a particular country, such as consumers’ perception of a country’s total scope of economics, technology, people, products, etc. (e.g., Josiassen et al., 2013; Laroche et al., 2005). Table 2 describes how various terms of country image, country-of-origin, etc. have inconsistently been used across studies. Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey (2007) explained that a broader concept of country image represents a macro approach that studies the total descriptive beliefs about a particular country, while the old country-of-origin concept presents a micro approach focusing only on the product images of a given country. Figure 2 describes such differences between the past country-of-origin concept and today’s country image principle. Pappu et al. (2007) argued that the later, broader country image concept is more desirable in measuring a comprehensive country image, as it captures both macro (e.g., the country’s economics, people, society products, etc.) and micro (i.e., the country’s products) aspects (see Figure 2). Thus, in this dissertation, the recent comprehensive

Table 2

Literature of Country Image

<i>Author(s) (year)</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Product category</i>
Schooler (1965)	Product bias	Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Mexico	Not specified
Nagashima (1970)	“made in”	U.S., Japan, Germany, England, France, Italy	Automobiles, electronics, textiles, cosmetics, foods, pharmaceutical products
Erickson et al. (1984)	Country-of-origin	Germany, Japan	Not specified
Johansson et al. (1985)	Country-of-origin	U.S., Japan	Automobiles
Han (1989)	Country image	U.S., Japan, Korea	TV, automobiles
Han (1990)	Country image	U.S., Japan, Korea	TV, automobiles
Papadopoulos et al. (1990)	Country origin	Canada, U.S., Japan, Sweden	Not specified
Roth & Romeo (1992)	Country-of-origin	U.K., Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Spain, U.S.	Beer, automobiles, leather shoes, crystal, bicycles, and watches
Martin & Eroglu (1993)	Country image	India, Germany	Not specified
Papadopoulos & Heslop (1993)	Country image	N/A ¹	N/A ¹
Shimp et al. (1993)	Country-of-origin	France, Germany, U.K., India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Russia, Switzerland, U.S., Yugoslavia	Not specified
Parameswaran & Pisharodi (1994)	Country-of-origin image	Germany, Korea	Automobiles, blenders
Agarwal & Sikri (1996)	Country image	Japan, Germany	Automobiles, bicycles, trucks, tennis rackets
Lee & Ganesh (1999)	Country image	U.S., Japan, Canada, Mexico	TV, VCR
Knight & Calantone (2000)	Country-of-origin image	Germany	Automobiles
Laroche et al. (2005)	Country image	Japan, Sweden	Not specified
Roth & Diamantopoulos (2009)	Country-of-origin image	N/A ¹	N/A ¹
Josiassen et al. (2013)	Country image	Not specified	Not specified

Source: Organized by the author based on the studies listed in the table.

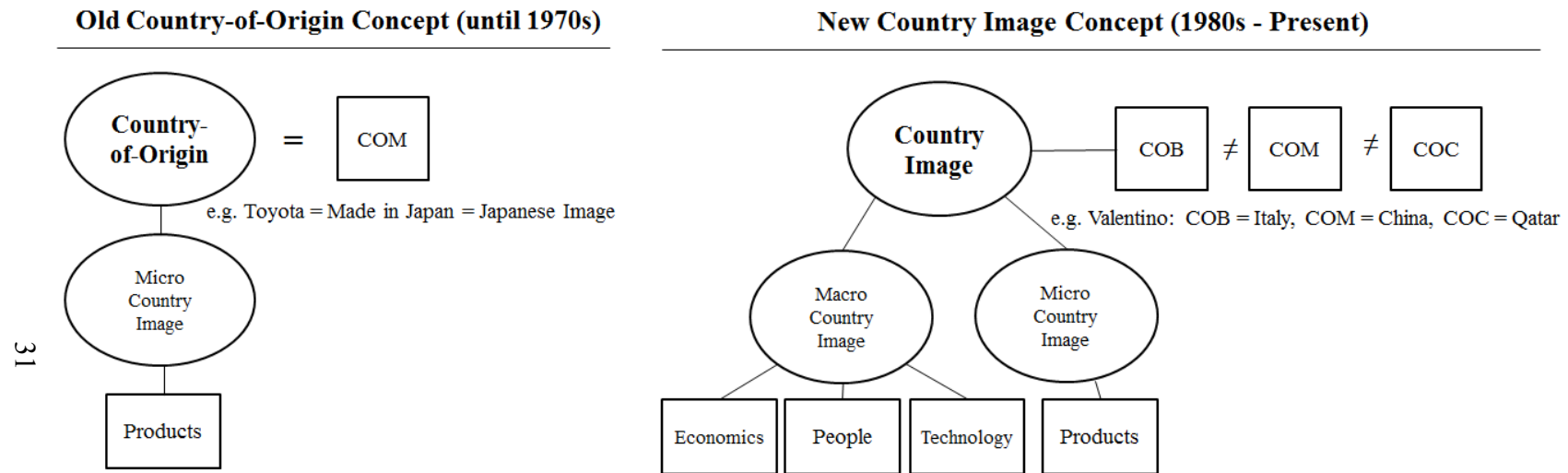
¹ These sources are conceptual/literature review so that countries/product categories are not selected.

concept of country image is used to refer to the overall beliefs that consumers hold toward the multi-facets of a particular country, such as the country's economics, people, technology, and products (Josiassen et al., 2013). This comprehensive concept of country image has thus been broadened into the research stream of *place branding* or *country branding*, which promotes the overall image of places/countries created by their culture, environments and people, not only by the products (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993).

In addition, the initial concept of country-of-origin lost its relevance since global sourcing practices and cross-border M&A became common in 1980-1990s. Cross-border M&A cases, such as Volvo's sale to a Chinese company (Stock, 2014) and MCM's (Modern Creation Munich; a German fine leather accessories brand) sale to a South Korean retail group (Ramirez, 2010), suggest that the origin country can be *moved* from one country to another. Through global sourcing, most products started to be produced by multiple countries as *hybrid products* or *multinational products* (Chao, 1993). According to these trends, researchers began discussing country image with multiple countries that are all involved in the ownership or production of a single brand/product. For example, Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993) addressed such complexity in explaining country image as follows: "unless viewed in strictly legal terms, "made-in" can mean manufactured-in but also assembled-, designed-, or invented-in, made by a producer whose domicile is-in, and, often, wanting to look like it was made-in ____" (p. 4). Chao (1993) provided examples mentioning cars that were made by Daewoo in South Korea, designed by Opel owned by GM in Germany, and sold in the U.S. as a German car. He posited that a single country-product association is no longer meaningful in today's offshoring businesses.

Figure 2

Comparison of Country-of-Origin and Country Image



Source: Developed by the author based on literature review

Note. COB = Country-of-brand origin, COC = Country-of-company, COM = Country-of-manufacturing

Table 3 summarizes the studies of hybrid/multinational products in the country image literature. As presented in Table 3, previous studies on hybrid products investigated partitioned countries associated with differing stages of production. Different terms are employed to refer to these multiple countries, such as the country-of-brand origin (COB), country-of-company (COC), country-of-manufacturing (COM), country-of-assembly (COA), country-of-design (COD) and country-of-parts (COP). In addition, automobiles and electronics industries were predominantly studied, with only two exceptions: Iyer and Kalita (1997) and Ha-Brookshire (2012) (see Table 3). These previous studies largely focused on finding whether these multiple countries compose a collective set as product attributes signaling product quality based on product attribute theories/product cue models (e.g., Chao, 1993; Hamzaoui-Essoussi & Merunka, 2007; Lee & Ulgado, 1996; Li et al., 2000). For instance, Hamzaoui-Essoussi and Merunka (2007) examined consumers' collective consideration of COD and COM in perceiving product quality and brand image. Li et al. (2000) examined the influences of the country images of COD, COC and COM on consumers' product quality evaluations. However, the commonality across these studies is that the potential discrepancies or conflicts between country images of these multiple countries is perceived by consumers, as well as their impact on brand-level outcomes, was not sufficiently explored. For example, the question of whether conflicting country images in one brand evoke any cognitive or affective reactions from consumers, as well as which among the COB, COC and COM are more/less sensitive in evaluating the brand, has yet to be fully explored.

Table 3

Hybrid Product Studies in the Country Image Literature

<i>Author(s) (year)</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Layers of Countries</i>	<i>Theory Used</i>	<i>Product Category</i>
Han & Terpstra (1988)	Bi-national product	COB ¹ , COM ²	Product attribute model	Televisions, cars
Chao (1993)	Hybrid product	COD ³ , COA ⁴	Multi-cue model	Electronics
Lee & Ulgado (1996)	Bi-national product	Brand name, COM	Product attribute model	Electronics, cars, apparel, bikes
Iyer & Kalita (1997)	Hybrid product	COB, COM	Country image effect	Shoes, stereos, jeans, watches
Brodowsky (1998)	Multinational product	COD, COA	Country image effect	Cars
Insch & McBride (1999)	-	COD, COA, COP ⁵	Product attribute model	Televisions, shoes, bikes
Li et al. (2000)	Multi-facet COO	COC ⁶ , COD, COA	Information processing theory	Televisions
Hamzaoui-Essoussi & Merunka (2007)	Hybrid, bi-national/multinational product	COD, COM	Product quality model	Televisions, cars
Hamzaoui-Essoussi et al. (2011)	-	COB, COM	Country image effect	Televisions, cars
Ha-Brookshire (2012)	Hybrid/multinational product	COP, COM	Information processing theory	Apparel

Source: Organized by the author based on the studies listed in the table.

Note. The studies are listed in a chronological order.

¹ COB = Country-of-brand origin; ² COM = Country-of-manufacturing; ³ COD = Country-of-design; ⁴ COA = Country-of-assembly; ⁵ COP = Country-of-parts; ⁶ COC = Country-of-company (corporation)

Application in Research

Today, country image is one of the most researched issues in international marketing, with over 400 journal articles and 1,000 publications released on the topic (Papadopoulos, 2007). The concept of country image has mostly been applied to measuring positive/negative images of particular countries as the origin of brands/products, thereby examining the role of country image as it increases or decreases the consumer preferences of particular brands/products; the most-read review articles of the country image research explain this tendency well (Nebenzahl, Jaffe, & Lampert, 1997; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009; Samiee, 1994). The underlying assumption of such an approach was that, again, perceived images of origin countries were used as the reference of consumers' brand/product perceptions, such as product quality and brand values, in making purchase decisions (Han, 1989). In measuring country image, Nagashima's (1970) simple semantic differential scale (e.g., "*the products from A country are unreliable ----- reliable*") has predominantly been adapted in early studies. However, the measure of country image has since become a multi-dimensional construct, as later researchers aimed instead to measure broader dimensions of country image, including economics, technology, people, and even the consumers' desired interaction and overall attitude toward the country (e.g., Laroche et al., 2005; Lee & Ganesh, 1999; Martin & Eroglu, 1993; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009).

Using these measures, the major purpose of previous country image researchers was to examine whether a particular country image affects consumers' positive or negative perception of the specific brands/products from that country. For this purpose,

specific countries and product categories were often selected for studies. The selection of specific product categories was based on the assumption that country image is specific to product categories; that is, a country can have a superior image in one product category but can have an inferior image in another product category (e.g., French fashion products are preferred but French automobiles may not be preferred) (Roth & Romeo, 1992).

Table 2, which is provided earlier, shows product categories that were popularly selected by previous country image researchers. It reveals that these selected product categories were likely to be concentrated on automobiles and electronics. As part of a noticeable trend, fashion products (e.g., clothing) or fashion brands were rarely selected by previous researchers; only a few, such as Nagashima (1970) which included textile products, considered related product categories in investigating country image. This tendency also surfaced for hybrid product studies (see Table 3).

As Table 2 presents, selected countries were also concentrated among countries that are highly industrialized and economically developed, often having superior images and reputations within certain product categories (e.g., U.S., Japan, Germany; as seen in Table 2). This might be because most researchers aimed to find the “benefit” of country image by studying how it enhances consumer preferences, which can provide managerial implications for increasing marketers’ profits. Despite the heavy volume of existing literature, there was limited consideration of countries with low preferences/inferior images as producers of specific product categories.

Country Image Research in the Fashion Studies

General Applications

As aforementioned, research that focused intensively on country image was limited in its discussion of fashion products despite its potential importance. In the few studies on fashion products, country image has been investigated to observe the influence of origin country images on consumers' perceptions toward particular fashion brands/products. In a classic study, Neuhauser and Morganosky (1994) examined the influence of country image, as part of fashion brands' attributes, on consumers' product choices through fashion catalogs. In later studies, popular research focused on comparing the images of developed countries and emerging countries as places of origin for fashion brands and/or clothing products. Such a focus was rather unique when considering that the general country image literature had only concentrated on the context of developed countries; the reason why emerging countries were discussed more often in fashion studies may be because offshoring from emerging countries is highly common in the fashion industry. For example, Phau and Leng (2008) compared consumers' perceptions toward "made in China" apparel and the apparel from other developed countries (i.e., Italy, Japan, and Australia). Lee, Phau, and Roy (2013) also compared the images of American, Australian, and Chinese underwear products among consumers. The common finding of these studies was that fashion products from an emerging country (i.e., China) have a low fashion image relative to the products from developed countries, suggesting the importance of country image management for the producers in emerging countries.

Moreover, in the fashion brand context, the role of country image was found to be especially important for luxury brands. For instance, Jung, Lee, Kim, and Yang (2014) found that country image is a critical determinant in building luxury brands' various brand assets, such as brand awareness, perceived product qualities, and brand loyalty.

However, there were some contradictory findings as well. Some researchers have found that country image is not always perceived as important by consumers in choosing fashion brands/products. For example, Forney, Rabolt, and Friend (1993) found that consumers do not always recall, nor are they always concerned with, the origin country in evaluating the values of clothing products. Heisey (1990) designed a realistic clothing purchase situation through experiment, wherein only the minimum product information (i.e., brand label, fiber content, recommended care, and origin country) that is required by the labeling law was available for consumers. Her findings revealed that country image has no direct effect on consumer evaluations of the perceived quality and price of clothes (Heisey, 1990). These findings therefore raise a question: is country image important for luxury brands (Jung et al., 2014) but not necessarily important for all kinds of clothes (Forney et al., 1993; Heisey, 1990)? In other words, would country image matter less for mass market brand clothing than for luxury brands? Due to the limited studies of country image in the fashion brand context, these questions still remain unanswered.

Studies on Fashion Brands' Cross-Border M&A and Offshoring

As cross-border M&A and offshoring practices are commonly found in the fashion industry (see Table 1), these two issues have been discussed in the context of the fashion industry. For instance, Rivoli (2005) described how pieces of a t-shirt travel

across three countries to be finally delivered to consumers through offshoring; the t-shirt was designed in the U.S. head office, sewed in China, labelled in Hong Kong to avoid tariffs, and sold to consumers in South Korea. In this case, the t-shirt clearly acquires the status of a hybrid/multinational product, with its country-of-brand origin (COB) as the U.S. and its country-of-manufacturing (COM) as China differing from each other.

However, the overall research on differing COB, COM and COC is still lacking in the fashion industry context compared to other product categories. For a few exceptions, Chung et al. (2014) focused on differing COB and COC resulting from cross-border fashion brand M&A. Through an experimental scenario, they found that if the Italian luxury brand Tod's were to be acquired by China, consumers' perceived values of the brand would decrease. However, such decline was only found among consumers with high brand loyalty, and only cases of luxury brands were examined in the study (Chung et al., 2014). In terms of offshoring, Ha-Brookshire (2012) manipulated the country-of-parts (i.e., COP; the origin country of fibers) and country-of-manufacturing (COM) of cotton products to be different countries. The study found that if the U.S. was the COP or COM of the products, they improved consumers' perceived price and purchase intention of apparel when compared to China (Ha-Brookshire, 2012). Similarly, Ahmed and d'Astous (2004) found that if developed countries (e.g., U.S., Italy, France, etc.) were labeled as the country-of-design (COD) or country-of-assembly (COA), they enhanced the perceived quality and purchase value of T-shirts when compared to developing countries (e.g., China, India, Mexico, etc.). However, the way in which these researchers specified the multiple countries associated with a brand was still fragmented across these studies.

In addition, the question of whether the influence of country image on brands/products is the same for all kinds of fashion brands/products, such as comparing luxury brands versus mass market brands, still remains undiscovered.

Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Theoretical Assumptions

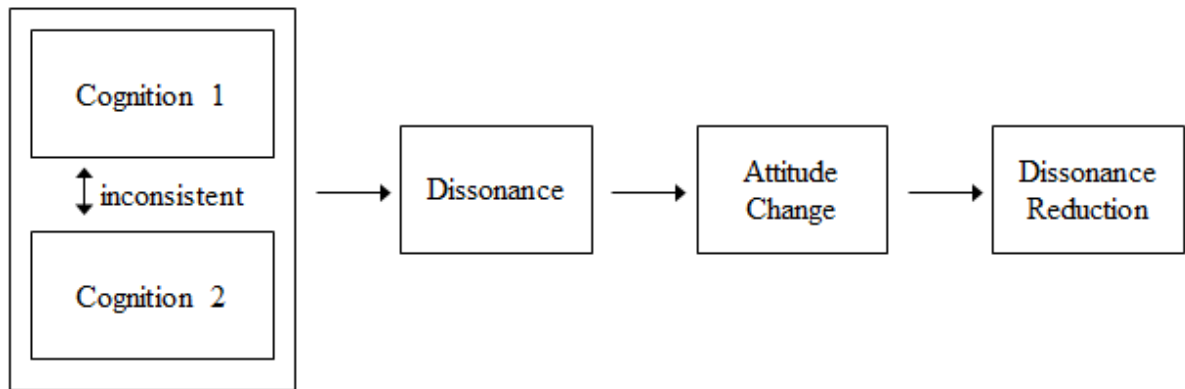
In 1957, Leon Festinger, a social psychologist, introduced cognitive dissonance theory, explaining inconsistent human behaviors. He posited that when people are exposed to the juxtaposition of two cognitive elements that are inconsistent with each other, it arouses a motivational state called dissonance, which engenders psychological discomfort (Festinger, 1957). His underlying assumption was that people instinctually prefer staying with consistent stimuli and maintaining a cognitive balance that does not arouse need for resolution (Festinger, 1957). In order to reduce the discomfort that results from dissonance, Festinger (1957) explained that people become motivated to cope with dissonance by decreasing psychological discomfort. He suggested two major ways of coping: i) changing one's attitude toward one of the cognitive elements, thereby making the two elements no longer inconsistent, and/or ii) ignoring or avoiding the information that causes dissonance (Festinger, 1957). For example, Anderson (1973) interpreted such dissonance reduction strategies as follows:

When an individual receives two ideas which are psychologically dissonant, he attempts to reduce this mental discomfort by changing or distorting one or both of the cognitions to make them more consonant. The stronger the cognitive dissonance, the more motivated he is to reduce dissonance by changing the cognitive element (Anderson, 1973, p. 39).

Figure 3 below provides some theoretical explanations of cognitive dissonance theory:

Figure 3

Cognitive Dissonance Model



Source: Adapted with re-formation from Griffin (1994).

The simplest example of cognitive dissonance theory explained by Festinger (1957) was smoking behavior. When one believes that smoking is enjoyable but also that health is important, a cognitive dissonance occurs because smoking is detrimental to one's health. As a result, the dissonance gives psychological stress to him/her, thus motivating the person to resolve the dissonance. In this situation, he/she may change his/her attitude toward health (e.g., "health is not that important, everybody will die at some point!") in order to reduce dissonance.

Applications of the Theory

Since Festinger's (1957) initial suggestion, cognitive dissonance theory has extensively been applied to various research topics in psychology, marketing, and consumer behavior disciplines. In the consumer behavior disciplines, one of the areas in which cognitive dissonance theory is most heavily adapted is the consumers' post-purchase product evaluation and coping strategies. Based on cognitive dissonance theory, many previous researchers explained that when consumers' pre-purchase expectation does not coincide with the post-purchase performance of the products, a cognitive dissonance occurs, arousing a motivational state demanding dissonance reduction, such as self-rationalization on the purchase, or product return (e.g., Anderson, 1973; Chatzidakis et al., 2009; Cohen & Goldberg, 1970; Sweeney, Hausknecht, & Soutar, 2000). As Festinger (1957) suggested, consumers then seek to reduce dissonance by changing their attitude toward the products, by thinking "this product is not that bad." (Chatzidakis et al., 2009). The theory is also often applied in the context of impulse buying to explain how consumers justify their impulse purchases by changing the attitudes (e.g., "I originally needed the product.") to decrease dissonance between their recognized guilt and the purchase made (Chatzidakis et al., 2009).

With regards to country image research, there has been limited effort to apply cognitive dissonance theory in studying consumers' perceptions of the discrepancies between the images of multiple countries associated with a brand. As Table 3 exhibited earlier, most studies on hybrid/multinational products instead focused on how consumers infer these multiple countries as a multi-cue of product evaluation, rather than exploring

the potential discrepancies between the images of different countries that might critically affect the product image. Although a few notable studies on cross-border M&A brought attention to a potential image conflict that can arouse between a COB and a COC (Chung et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2011; Lee et al., 2011), these studies did not clearly examine whether such conflict could cause consumer reactions such as cognitive dissonance, but only assumed that identical COB and COC are preferred over heterogeneous COB and COC by consumers (Chung et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2011).

Homans's Social Exchange Theory

Theoretical Assumptions

Social exchange theory came about first from the research of Homans (1958), who believed that human beings are actors with the ability to think reasonably. He posited that people act for rewards that are comparable to the costs they spend in social behaviors. In other words, he assumed that people calculate the compensation between the inputs they make and the outputs they gain from social interactions, expecting to gain a just amount of outputs as a reward from the interactions (Homans, 1958). According to Homans's (1958) statements:

Social behavior is an exchange of goods, material goods but also non-material ones, such as the symbols of approval or prestige. Persons that give much to others try to get much from them, and persons that get much from others are under pressure to give much to them. This process of influence tends to work out at equilibrium to a balance in the exchanges. For a person engaged in exchange, what he gives may be a cost to him, just as what he gets may be a reward... (Homans, 1958, p. 606).

As Homans (1958) stated, “persons that give much to others try to get much from them” (p. 606). Researchers have explained that social interactions are interdependent and contingent upon the actions of another person (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Moreover, as Homans (1958) argued that “persons that get much from others are under pressure to give much to them” (p. 606), researchers have posited that social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate the obligations assigned to one party toward the other party’s rewards (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976). Adams (1965) described social exchange with the following schematic equation, which explains the equilibrium or balance between one person’s reward out of investment and the other person’s reward out of investment (p. 273). He explained that examples of investments include one’s effort, time, and practice. For example, once a person puts time and commitment into a social interaction, he/she will expect a fair amount of reward, such as a favor, product, or satisfaction from the other party of the interaction (Adams, 1965).

$$\frac{A's\ rewards - A's\ costs}{A's\ investments} = \frac{B's\ rewards - B's\ costs}{B's\ investments}$$

Applications of the Theory

Based on this logic, social exchange theory has been applied to a variety of research explaining the reciprocity relationships among various parties. One of these popular research areas is service settings, wherein a customer and a service provider can create a social interaction. Previous researchers have found that consumers tend to expect

to gain just rewards from service providers compared to their inputs in the service settings, and as a result, their satisfaction is increased when such expectation is met. For example, Smith et al. (1999) examined how appropriate rewards for service failures (e.g., compensation, apology, etc.) improve customer satisfaction, thereby recovering customer relationships. Sierra and McQuitty (2005) found that a customer and a service provider create shared responsibilities and affective ties through interactions in service settings, and the customer increases service loyalty when the provider meets his/her expectation and provides the service that was promised.

Another area in which social exchange theory has been applied is the relationship between customer satisfaction and perceived price fairness. In studies on this topic, the parties that are involved in social exchanges can extend into brands and products, from the human versus human relationship in the original theory. That is, if consumption settings are taken to be social exchanges, consumers consider inputs (e.g., price, cost, time, etc.) that they made into the consumption and expect to gain fair outputs from the consumption, such as good quality of the brand/product they purchase. Homburg et al. (2005) explained that when a consumer chooses a product, “he/she must believe the price is equitable or fair relative to the output (i.e., the quality of the product or service), otherwise the probability of repurchase is lowered” (p. 41). They also posited that the price of products or services serve as consumers’ normative price expectation, as well as the key input that consumers put into the exchange (Homburg et al., 2005). Herrmann, Xia, Monroe, and Huber (2007) also postulated that the fairness of a product transaction is based upon the allocation of rewards (i.e., product quality) resulting from consumers’

contributions (i.e., the price of the product) to the transaction. As a result, they found that equality between price and product quality drives consumer satisfaction, while inequality between price and product quality results in consumers' perceptions of unfairness and dissatisfaction (Herrmann et al., 2007).

However, little attempt has been made to apply social exchange theory to investigations of consumers' differing levels of expectations toward brands across brand tiers, particularly when comparing their expectation levels toward luxury brands' country image and mass market brands' country image. This is the agenda that this study attempts to address.

Brand Credibility and Brand Prestige

Brand Credibility

Brand credibility is defined as “the believability of the product information contained in a brand, which requires that consumers perceive the brand to have the ability (i.e., expertise) and willingness (i.e., trustworthiness) to continuously deliver what has been promised” (Erdem & Sawit, 2004, p. 192). The concept of brand credibility was developed and specified by Erdem and Swait (1998, 2004). Based on signaling theory, which explains that brands serve as signals of product attributes, they proposed that brand credibility is a crucial determinant in the product quality of the brand (Erdem & Sawit, 2004; Wernerfelt, 1988). Brand credibility is a historic asset that is built through the cumulative effect of past marketing mix strategies, reputation over time, and consumer experiences (Erdem & Sawit, 2004). While other marketing mix strategies—such as advertising and promotions—appeal to consumers based on product quality, they are not

always perceived as credible to consumers. Brand credibility is a more stable, intangible asset that is built and shaped by consumers and their brand choices (Erdem & Swait, 2004).

The dimensions, antecedents, and outcomes of brand credibility are well explained by Baek et al. (2010). Based on Erdem and Swait (1998, 2004), Baek et al. (2010) explained that brand credibility is composed of two dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise represents the ability of a brand to actually deliver what it has promised, which includes quality control. Trustworthiness represents the brand's willingness to deliver what it has promised, which includes sincerity in the customer relationship (Baek et al., 2010). Summarizing the literature, Baek et al. (2010) explained that consistency and clarity are the most important antecedents to building brand credibility. For instance, features such as consistency in product attributes and maintenance of product quality lead to a low level of product variability, thereby enhancing brand credibility (Baek et al., 2010; Roberts & Urban, 1988). Clarity—also known as lack of ambiguity regarding the product information contained in a brand—was also found to improve brand credibility (Baek et al., 2010; Erdem et al., 2002).

In terms of the outcomes of brand credibility, many previous researchers have found strong benefits to building brand credibility. For example, brand credibility increases perceived product quality, thereby decreasing information costs and perceived risks and increasing consumers' purchase intentions (Baek et al., 2010; Erdem & Swait, 1998). Aaker (1991) also suggested that higher perceived quality and lower risks associated with a credible brand improve the overall evaluations of a brand (Baek et al.,

2010). Clearly, brand credibility is a strong competitive advantage for brands that wish to increase various positive consumer reactions, for it conveys the image of a stable, long-term brand asset that is built upon consumers' trustworthiness and favoritism toward the brand (Erdem & Swait, 2004).

Despite the important role of brand credibility in consumers' reactions, brand credibility has been limitedly applied in the study of country image-related topics. Since brand credibility is determined by consistency and clarity of product/brand-related information (Baek et al., 2010; Erdem et al., 2002; Roberts & Urban, 1988), it is questionable whether and how discrepancies between multiple country images associated with a brand, which likely decrease consistency and clarity of brand properties, affect brand credibility. To our knowledge, no research has clearly answered this question by approaching the impact of discrepancies among country images on brand credibility, particularly in the fashion brand context.

Brand Prestige

Another important concept suggested to be advantageous for brands, especially luxury brands, is brand prestige. Brand prestige is defined as "the relatively high status of product positioning associated with a brand" that is built by the inherent worth, unique know-how, or luxurious image of a brand (Hwang & Hyun, 2012, p. 657; McCarthy & Perreault, 1987; Steenkamp et al., 2003). Because brand prestige provides consumers with not only tangible benefits (e.g., signal of superior product quality) but also with intangible benefits (e.g., signals of social status, expressive values, and self-image satisfaction) that cannot be often delivered by non-prestige brands, brand prestige is a

competitive advantage held by prestigious brands (Hwang & Hyun, 2012; Steenkamp et al., 2003).

Similarly to brand credibility, brand prestige drives positive consumer reactions to the brand, such as perceived price fairness (i.e., which drives consumers' willingness to pay premium price for the brand), customer satisfaction (Hwang & Hyun, 2012), perceived product quality, and purchase intentions of the brand (Baek et al., 2010). Vigneron and Johnson (1999) explained that brand prestige provides competitive brand values to consumers, including perceived unique value, social value, hedonic value, and quality value.

Despite the benefits of building brand prestige, Baek et al. (2010) pointed out that brand prestige has yet to be sufficiently examined in empirical studies, particularly alongside the concept of brand credibility. They argued that brand credibility indicates a utilitarian portion of brand assets by signaling lower risks and information costs associated with a brand, whereas brand prestige represents a hedonic portion of brand assets that deliver certain social and expressive values of the brand (Baek et al., 2010). For this reason, Baek et al. (2010) suggested the importance of investigating the two concepts together, in order to explore both the utilitarian and hedonic facets of brand assets. Nevertheless, such an approach is still limited in the literature and very little is known about the effect of discrepancies in country image on fashion brands' credibility and prestige.

Clothing Product Involvement

Involvement indicates “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (Bearden et al., 2011; Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342). Previous researchers have conceptualized involvement as a stable, enduring construct that is changed only to the degree of variance in consumers’ value system (Bloch, 1981; Bloch & Richins, 1983; Fairhurst, Good, & Gentry, 1989; O’Cass, 2000). In other words, temporary characteristics of the purchase situation do not necessarily create an effect on a consumer’s involvement in a focal object (O’Cass, 2000). Because consumers’ involvement levels with an object steadily influence their attitudes and behaviors regarding the object, consumer involvement with various products was a subject of interest to previous researchers (e.g., Fairhurst et al., 1989; Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006; O’Cass, 2000).

Based on this concept of involvement, clothing product involvement indicates a consumer’s perceived relevance with clothing products, including his/her interest in, importance of, pleasure with, and self-expressive and signal values of clothes (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). Through an extensive review of the literature, Michaelidou and Dibb (2006) developed a 15-item scale of clothing product involvement that measures individual consumers’ involvement with clothing products, which captures the five dimensions (i.e., interest in, importance of, pleasure with, and self-expressive and signal values of clothes. For instance, they explained that a consumer’s involvement with clothing stems from the interest and importance consumers attach to clothing products (i.e., interest and importance dimensions), the pleasure and enjoyment they receive from

shopping clothes (i.e., pleasure dimension), and the perceived self-expressive and signal values of clothing as a means of their symbolic communications (i.e., self-expressive and signal values dimensions) (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). As with the general involvement construct, individual consumers' levels of clothing product involvement significantly affect their attitudes and behaviors regarding clothes. For example, fashion clothing product involvement often positively relates to consumers' knowledge of fashion clothing and confidence in making clothes purchasing decisions (O'Cass, 2004). Kim (2005) classified consumer profiles based on their levels of clothing product involvement and found that more active, enthusiastic consumers with high levels of involvement in clothing are more likely to recognize the value of clothing products. In addition, consumers' fashion clothing product involvement was found to increase perceived brand status and, in turn, increase their willingness to pay a premium for specific brands (O'Cass & Choy, 2008).

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of discrepant multiple country images in a fashion brand on consumers' perceptions of the brand (i.e., brand credibility and brand prestige). Based on the literature review and two theories (i.e., cognitive dissonance theory and social exchange theory), a conceptual framework for this study is developed in Figure 4. For theoretical backgrounds, cognitive dissonance theory provides a rationale for the effect of discrepancies in country image on the arousal of cognitive dissonance, and social exchange theory provides an explanation for the differing effects of such discrepancy on brand credibility and prestige across brand tiers (see Figure 4).

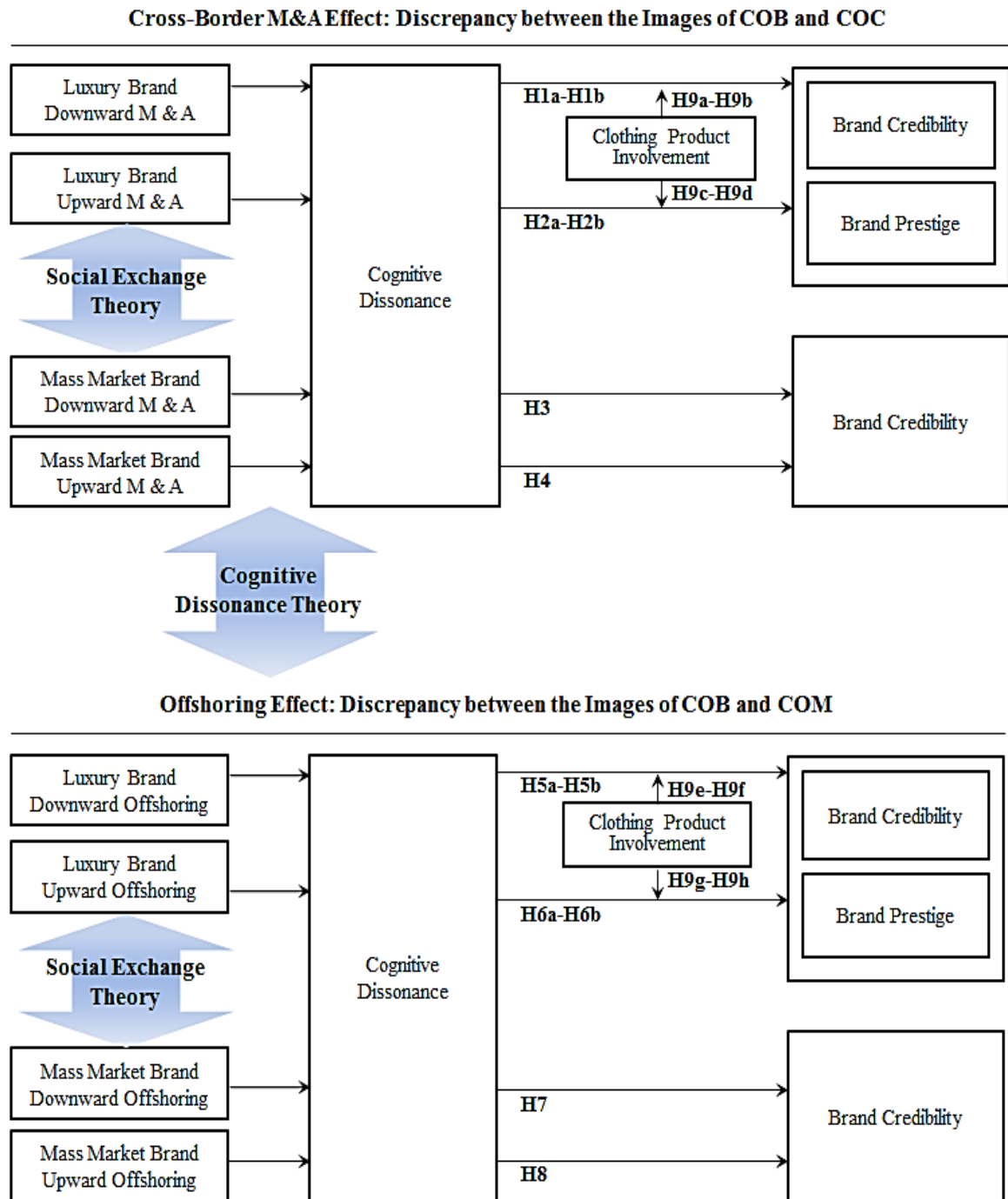
The conceptual framework includes a total of twenty hypotheses (H1a-H9h) developed for four possible downward/upward cross-border M&A (upper part of the framework) and offshoring (bottom part of the framework) cases for two contexts, the luxury brand context and the mass market brand context.

The upper part of Figure 4 illustrates four hypotheses about the cross-border M&A effect, which creates discrepancies between COB and COC: H1a-H2b examines the effect of those discrepancies on luxury brands' credibility and prestige, and H3-H4 examines that effect on mass market brands' brand credibility. In addition, H9a-H9d tests the moderating effect of clothing product involvement on H1a-H2b.

The bottom part of Figure 4 presents four hypotheses about the result of offshoring practices, which create discrepancies between COB and COM: H5a-H6b examines the effect of those discrepancies on luxury brands' credibility and prestige, and H7-H8 examines the same effect on mass market brands' credibility. Additionally, H9e-H9h tests the moderating effect of clothing product involvement on H5a-H6b. Since the concept of brand prestige is originally not a characteristic of mass market brands but of luxury brands (Hwang & Hyun, 2012), no hypothesis has developed around brand prestige in the mass market brand context. Also, because the relationship between discrepancies in country image and brand credibility and prestige will be hypothesized as not significant in the mass market brand context, a hypothesis about the moderator has not developed for the mass market brand context. The detailed rationale for each hypothesis is presented in the following sections.

Figure 4

The Conceptual Framework



Cross-Border M&A Effect: Discrepancy between the Images of COB and COC

As a result of cross-border M&A, a fashion brand's country-of-brand origin (COB) and country-of-company (COC) can be different, and these two countries may have different country images. The first six hypotheses (H1a-H4) are developed to test the effect of such discrepancies on brand credibility and prestige, in both luxury brand and mass market brand contexts.

Luxury Brand Cases

According to Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, when people are exposed to the juxtaposition of two cognitive elements that are contradictory to each other, such exposure provokes cognitive dissonance that yields psychological discomfort. Discrepant COB and COC due to cross-border M&A can cause a juxtaposition of contradicting elements, thus evoking cognitive dissonance among consumers. More specifically, such dissonance can arise from the gap between the images of the two countries (i.e., COB and COC), especially if one of the countries is a high fashion image country while another has a low fashion image (see Figure 1).

Cognitive dissonance theory explains that when dissonance occurs, consumers are motivated to modify their attitudes toward the object to reduce the psychological discomfort created by the dissonance (Festinger, 1957). This study hypothesizes that cognitive dissonance occurs from the discrepant images of COB and COC, which can result in modification of consumers' perceptions toward the brand, particularly in terms of brand credibility and brand prestige. Because brand credibility is determined by consistency in information about the brand (Baek et al., 2010; Erdem et al., 2002; Roberts

& Urban, 1988), incongruity between COB and COC and discrepancy between their country images may significantly alter brand credibility. Because brand prestige refers to the relatively high status of a brand based on its heritage (Hwang & Hyun, 2012), a change of corporate ownership (COC) of luxury brands from their birth country to a foreign country can influence their brand prestige. Specifically in downward cross-border M&A cases, both brand credibility and brand prestige will be decreased when the COC of a brand is moved from a high fashion image country (e.g., Italy) to a low fashion image country (e.g., China). Supporting this reasoning, Chung et al. (2014) empirically concluded that the acquisition of the Italian luxury brand Tod's by a Chinese company decreased consumers' perceived brand values. On the other hand, the result of an upward cross-border M&A can be an increase in brand credibility and prestige, since a transition occurred from a low fashion image country (e.g., China) to a high fashion image country (e.g., France). Therefore, H1a-H1b and H2a-H2b are developed as follows:

H1. In the case of a **luxury brand downward M&A**, discrepancies between the images of the COB (high fashion image country) and the COC (low fashion image country) **decrease** brand credibility (**H1a**) and brand prestige (**H1b**).

H2. In the case of a **luxury brand upward M&A**, discrepancies between the images of the COB (low fashion image country) and the COC (high fashion image country) **increase** brand credibility (**H2a**) and brand prestige (**H2b**).

Mass Market Brand Cases

Next, H3 and H4 pertain to the cross-border M&A of mass market brands.

According to researchers, consumers do not always pay attention to the country image of brand levels. This study takes its rationale from Homans's (1958) social exchange theory.

Social exchange theory explains that when people give to others, they expect to gain something in return (Homans, 1958). Therefore, consumers expect more from luxury brands than from mass market brands because decisions regarding luxury brands require greater amounts of input in the form of consideration, involvement, and, in particular, greater expenses. With this in mind, this study expects consumers not to put importance on a change in COC of a mass market brand, since decisions regarding mass market brands purchase do not involve as much input as luxury brands require. For example, when a consumer finds that Valentino is now owned by a Chinese company when purchasing a luxury Valentino dress, that recognition may substantially influence his/her decision. However, when a consumer chooses a \$20 Gap t-shirt, the fact that the brand has been acquired by a foreign company may not be a critical factor in his/her perception of the brand. Indeed, Ahmed et al. (2004) found that in low involvement purchase situations, consumers show less concern over the country image of brands/products.

We can examine this issue in both downward and upward M&A cases of mass market brands. For example, a situation involving an Italian mass market brand acquired by a Chinese investor and a situation in which a Chinese local mass market brand is acquired by a European firm may both emerge. However, in both downward and upward M&A cases of mass market brands, based on the logic built upon social exchange theory, the discrepancy between images of COB and COC due to such cross-border M&As would not significantly change consumers' perceived brand credibility of mass market brands. As mentioned already, brand prestige is originally not a property of mass market brands but of luxury brands (Hwang & Hyun, 2012); thus, no hypothesis has developed

around brand prestige for the mass market brand context. Therefore, H3 and H4 are developed as follows:

H3. In the case of a **mass market brand downward M&A**, discrepancies between the images of the COB (high fashion image country) and the COC (low fashion image country) do **not** influence brand credibility.

H4. In the case of a **mass market brand upward M&A**, discrepancies between the images of the COB (low fashion image country) and the COC (high fashion image country) do **not** influence brand credibility.

Offshoring Effect: Discrepancy between the Images of COB and COM

The next six hypotheses (H5a-H8) are developed to examine the effect of differing country-of-brand origin (COB) and country-of-manufacturing (COM) due to fashion brands' offshoring practices. H5a-H5b and H6a-H6b deal with luxury brand cases while H7 and H8 address mass market brand cases.

Luxury Brand Cases

Offshoring results in one fashion brand having a different COB and COM, and these countries might have substantially different country images from one another. Applying a similar rationale to cases of cross-border M&A in fashion brands, such discrepancies may also cause cognitive dissonance among consumers (Festinger, 1957). This cognitive dissonance then triggers consumers' modification of perception toward the brand (Festinger, 1957), especially their perceived credibility and prestige of the brand.

As with cross-border M&A, the shift of COM due to offshoring can also happen in both downward and upward directions. For example, for a downward offshoring case such as Valentino (COB = Italy, high fashion image country) taking production in China

(COM = China, low fashion image country), consumers' modification of brand perception would lead to a decrease in brand credibility and prestige because the COM is moved from a high fashion image country to a low fashion image country. If a Chinese brand tries to produce products in Italy to improve quality/product image with a "made in Italy" label (Thomas, 2007)—an example of an upward offshoring case—then brand credibility and prestige may increase since the COM is moved from a low fashion image country to a high fashion image country. As such, H5a-H5b and H6a-H6b are developed as follows:

H5. In the case of **luxury brand downward offshoring**, discrepancies between the images of the COB (high fashion image country) and the COM (low fashion image country) **decrease** brand credibility (**H5a**) and brand prestige (**H5b**).

H6. In the case of **luxury brand upward offshoring**, discrepancies between the images of the COB (low fashion image country) and the COM (high fashion image country) **increase** brand credibility (**H6a**) and brand prestige (**H6b**).

Mass Market Brand Cases

In applying similar assumptions with those of the cross-border M&A cases, social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) suggests that the shift of COM in mass market brands would not significantly affect consumers because decisions regarding mass market brands do not involve large amounts of time, involvement, or expenses. For example, if a consumer finds that a luxury Valentino dress is actually manufactured in China, that recognition may substantially downgrade his/her perception toward the brand. However, when a consumer shops at a mass market brand store, such as Old Navy or Forever 21,

he/she would not expect “made in Italy” or “made in USA” labels, since he/she would have lower levels of expectation toward the brands based on the inputs involved (e.g., prices) (Homans, 1958).

Based on this logic, we expect differing COB and COM not to have a significant effect on mass market brands’ credibility and prestige, neither in downward cases in which the COM is moved from a high fashion image country to a low fashion image country, nor in upward cases in which the COM is moved from a low fashion image country to a high fashion image country. Again, because mass market brands originally do not represent prestige, no hypotheses have been developed around brand prestige in cases of mass market brand tiers. Accordingly, H7 and H8 are developed as follows:

H7. In the case of **mass market brand downward offshoring**, discrepancies between the images of the COB (high fashion image country) and the COM (low fashion image country) do **not** influence brand credibility.

H8. In the case of **mass market brand upward offshoring**, discrepancies between the images of the COB (low fashion image country) and the COM (high fashion image country) do **not** influence brand credibility.

Moderating Effect of Clothing Product Involvement

The final hypotheses, H9a-H9h, are developed to examine the moderating effect of clothing product involvement. Regarding cases where the inconsistencies between the COB, COC, and COM influence brand credibility and prestige, this study posits that individual consumers’ levels of clothing product involvement can moderate such relationships. In the literature review, clothing product involvement is discussed as a consumer’s perceived relevance toward clothing products, based on his/her interest in and

perceived importance of clothes (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). Clothing product involvement largely influences consumer behaviors regarding fashion brands and products, since it is positively related to consumers' overall knowledge about clothes (O'Cass, 2004). Consumers with a high level of clothing product involvement are also more likely to recognize the value of clothing products (Kim, 2005), to perceive brand status, and to be willing to pay a premium for such brand status (O'Cass & Choy, 2008).

Based on these observations, this study hypothesizes that consumers with a high level of clothing product involvement are more attentive and sensitive to the inconsistent COB, COC and COM of fashion brands, since they possess higher levels of attention, interest in and involvement with fashion brands (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). As a result, such discrepancies in country image could affect their perceptions of brand credibility and prestige more significantly than the perceptions of consumers with low clothing product involvement. In other words, the increase or decrease of luxury brands' credibility and prestige, as hypothesized in H1a-H2b and H5a-H6b, will be intensified by consumers' levels of clothing product involvement. Therefore, H9a-H9h are:

H9. Clothing product involvement moderates (intensifies) the effect of discrepancies between the images of COB, COC, and COM on **luxury brands**, such that:

H9a-b. In the case of downward M&A, the decrease of brand credibility (**H9a**) and brand prestige (**H9b**) is **greater** among consumers with **high** clothing product involvement.

H9c-d. In the case of upward M&A, the increase of brand credibility (**H9c**) and brand prestige (**H9d**) is **greater** among consumers with **high** clothing product involvement.

H9e-f. In the case of downward offshoring, the decrease of brand credibility (**H9e**) and brand prestige (**H9f**) is **greater** among consumers with **high** clothing product involvement.

H9g-h. In the case of upward offshoring, the increase of brand credibility (**H9g**) and brand prestige (**H9h**) is **greater** among consumers with **high** clothing product involvement.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology for testing the twenty hypotheses (H1a-H9h) developed in Chapter II. First, the information that is applied to all stages of data collection is described. This includes the online survey method, sample, development of stimuli, and measurements used for the research. Afterwards, the specific data collection procedure is explained in three parts: the pilot interview, the pre-test survey, and the actual experiments. The design and procedure of the pilot interview and pre-test survey are described first, as they were conducted prior to the actual experiments. Finally, the designs of the four experimental studies are provided.

Overall Research Design

Online Surveys

Except for the pilot interview, data were collected via Qualtrics online survey throughout the pre-test and the experimental studies. Data collection through online surveys has several advantages: first, it is convenient and cost-efficient (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2008). Also, Qualtrics offers a function that randomly assigns the participants into different groups, which facilitates the objectivity and convenience of randomization necessary for experimental research. In addition, data collection using online surveys minimizes the violation of the assumption of independence between participants (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), since each participant can answer

the survey in settings independent from those of other participants. Based on these advantages, data were collected online in both the pre-test and the experimental studies for the current research.

Sample

American college students aged eighteen and above were selected for the samples of all data collection procedures, from the pilot interview to the pre-test and the actual experimental studies: specifically, four students were recruited for the pilot interview, 30 students, for the pre-test, and 400 students, for experiments. College students were selected based on the following three criteria. First, college students are the major target consumer segment for fashion brands. With their purchasing power exceeding \$200 billion, fashion products such as clothes are their major shopping items. For this reason, college age students represent a significant consumer group for fashion marketing in the United States (Martin & Turley, 2004; Park, Kim, & Forney, 2006). In addition to their purchasing power in mass fashion markets, their presence in the luxury fashion market is also growing rapidly, since they tend to be less hesitant when purchasing luxury goods than are older generations, in spite of their relatively limited income (Halpert, 2012). Comprising the major target segment of both mass and luxury brands, college students and their perception of fashion brands are therefore worthwhile to study (Carpenter & Fairhurst, 2005).

Second, college student samples have been traditionally preferred by experimental research designs by previous researchers. Since student samples provide relatively a homogeneous group in terms of age, income, education, and other demographic variables

compared to general populations (Calder, Phillips, & Tybout, 1981; Childs, 2014), they have widely been used in experimental studies to test the effects of specific variables within a constrained setting, since the random errors and variances from those demographics should ideally be strictly controlled (e.g., Chan, Berger, & Van Boven, 2012; Childs, 2014; Durante, Griskevicius, Hill, Perilloux, & Li, 2011). For this reason, college student samples were also used in previous experimental research that studied consumer behaviors regarding luxury brands in premier academic journals, such as the *Journal of Marketing* and *Journal of Consumer Research* (e.g., Fuchs, Prandelli, Schreier, & Dahl, 2013; Pozharliev, Verbeke, Van Strien, & Bagozzi, 2015; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014).

Third, although college student samples may engender a generalizability issue, previous researchers have asserted that the statistical difference between the use of student samples and general consumer samples is minimal enough to be justified (Brown & Beltramini, 1989; Carpenter & Fairhurst, 2005; Khera & Benson, 1970). Especially for this study examining the effect of country image on brand credibility and prestige (i.e., brand image variables that are constructed by consumer crowds), there is little necessity to select heavy users or major consumers of luxury brands that are not college students. Indeed, selecting only consumers who have purchased the brand or are heavy users of the brand can bias the results of brand credibility and prestige, since these consumers might have higher perceptions about the brand's credibility and prestige because they have purchase/used the brand. For these reasons, a college student sample was selected for this research.

Selection of Countries

In order to examine inconsistent country images within one fashion brand, one country with a high fashion image and another country with a low fashion image were selected. Here, country image must be product category-specific, since one country can have different images and reputations across product categories (Roth & Romeo, 1992).

In the fashion product category, Italy and China are generally accepted as countries of high fashion image and low fashion image, respectively. Previous researchers have commonly used Italy as a sample country representing a positive image with long heritage and prestige in the fashion product categories (Chung et al., 2014; Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004). On the other hand, researchers have generally accepted China as a country that is not as highly attractive or preferred as Italy as an origin country for fashion brands/products among consumers (Chao, Wuhrer, & Wernei, 2005; Chung et al., 2014). However, China is deemed as a very important country to research because the country plays a critical role in the global apparel economy with its dominant presence in the production supply and fast-growing branding business (Sternquist, 2007). For this reason, China has often been selected as a sample country in the country image research in the fashion industry, often representing low fashion image countries with less competitive reputations and preferences in fashion product categories (Chung et al., 2014; Ha-Brookshire, 2012).

Based on this reasoning, this study selected Italy and China for the two sample countries to represent a high and a low fashion image country, respectively. This selection was validated through a pre-test, which will be explained in the later section.

Stimuli Development

In order to test the developed hypotheses, four fictitious fashion brands (i.e., two brand tiers x high/low fashion image country) were created. Fictitious brands were used in adherence to the tradition of previous researchers, in order to control the potential influence of established brand effects, such as brand image, brand loyalty, and other knowledge and experiences that consumers might have with an existing brand (Low & Lamb Jr., 2000). Since Italy and China were selected to represent high and low fashion image countries respectively, four fictitious brand names were created through translation of the words “luxurious” and “casual” into Italian and Chinese. They are: *Signolilità* (Italian luxury brand), *Kuochuo* (Chinese luxury brand), *LaVestiti* (Italian mass market brand), and *Xiuxianfu* (Chinese mass market brand).

Accordingly, two sets of images, including four pictorial stimuli, were developed to represent the images of these luxury and mass market fictitious brands (see Appendix A). One set was the images with a model, consisting of: one picture of the luxury brand image, and another picture for the mass market brand image. The other set was the images without a model, specifically, the store images only having objects in them: one picture for the luxury brand image, and another picture for the mass market brand image. All of the images were obtained online (sources of the images are provided in Appendix A). Two sets were developed because it was not known whether the images with a model or the images without a model function better in representing the contrast between luxury brands and mass market brands as a stimulus. The same luxury brand/mass market brand images were used in representing both Italian luxury brand/mass market brand and

Chinese luxury brand/mass market brand in the experiments, except for the languages signaling where the brand is an “Italian” or a “Chinese” brand (e.g., “*Signolilità* – Italian luxury”; “*Xiuxianfu* – Chinese casual for everybody”; see Appendix A). The purpose of this was to avoid any confounding variables in the images such as, the background, color, appearance of the model, other than the COB cues that are manipulated by the signaling languages.

Measurements

A total of five measurements were used in this research. These measurements are country image scale, cognitive dissonance scale, brand credibility scale, brand prestige scale, and clothing product involvement scale. The items, scales, and sources of all measurements used in the pre-test and experiments are summarized in Table 4.

Country Image

A country image scale was used to validate the selection of Italy and China as the countries representing a high fashion image country and a low fashion image country, respectively. Particularly, the country images of Italy and China as the sources of fashion brands were measured using Josiassen et al.’s (2013) Category-Origin Image Scale.

While different researchers have suggested a variety of country image scales, ranging from highly product quality-specific scales (e.g., Nagashima, 1970) to generic country image scales (e.g., Laroche et al., 2005; Lee & Ganesh, 1999; Martin & Eroglu, 1993), Josiassen et al.’s (2013) category-origin scale has been determined as the best scale for the purpose because the intent of this pre-test is to measure country image in a particular product category (i.e., fashion). The scale consists of six items that each use a seven-point

Table 4

Summary of Measurements

<i>Variable (# of Items)</i>	<i>Items (# of items in each dimension)</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Source</i>
Country Image (6)	<p>There is a long tradition in <u>that country</u> for making fashion products.</p> <p>People in <u>that country</u> are very experienced at making fashion products.</p> <p>Fashion products from <u>that country</u> are overall superior.</p> <p>Fashion products from <u>that country</u> are a good choice.</p> <p>Fashion products from <u>that country</u> are better than similar products from other countries.</p> <p>Fashion products from <u>that country</u> are of high quality.</p>	7-pt Likert	Josiassen et al. (2012)
Cognitive Dissonance (22)	<p><i>Emotional (15)</i></p> <p>Despair, Resent, Disappointed, Scared, Hollow, Angry, Uneasy, Down, Annoyed, Frustrated, Pain, Depressed, Furious, Sick, Agony</p> <p><i>Wisdom of Brand/Product Choice (4)</i></p> <p>I wonder if I really need this brand.</p> <p>I wonder whether I should buy this brand.</p> <p>I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.</p> <p>I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.</p> <p><i>Concern over the Justice of the Choice (3)</i></p> <p>About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.</p> <p>About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.</p> <p>About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.</p>	7-pt Likert	Sweeney et al. (2000)
Brand Credibility (6)	<p>This brand delivers (or would deliver) what it promises.</p> <p>Product claims from this brand are believable.</p> <p>I expect this brand to keep its promises.</p> <p>This brand is committed to delivering on its claims.</p> <p>This brand has a name you can trust.</p> <p>This brand has the ability to deliver what it promises.</p>	7-pt Likert	Baek et al. (2010)

Table 4

Summary of Measurements (Cont'd)

Brand Prestige (3)	<p>This brand is very prestigious.</p> <p>This brand has high status.</p> <p>This brand is very upscale.</p>	7-pt Likert	Baek et al. (2010)
Clothing Product Involvement (15)	<p><i>Interest (3)</i></p> <p>It is true that clothing interests me a lot.</p> <p>Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.*</p> <p>I am not at all interested in clothes.*</p> <p><i>Importance (5)</i></p> <p>I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.</p> <p>Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.</p> <p>I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.</p> <p>I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.</p> <p>Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.</p> <p><i>Pleasure (4)</i></p> <p>It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.</p> <p>I enjoy buying clothes for myself.</p> <p>I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.</p> <p>Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.</p> <p><i>Self-expressive Value (2)</i></p> <p>Clothes help me express who I am.</p> <p>Clothing is not part of my self-image.*</p> <p><i>Signal Value (1)</i></p> <p>The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.*</p>	5-pt Likert	Michaelidou & Dibb (2006)

*Reverse-coded items.

Likert scale (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree), with statements such as the following: “There is a long tradition in this country for making certain types of products”, “These types of products from this country are generally superior”, and “These types of products from this country are better than similar products from other countries”. The detailed items of the scale are provided in Table 4. The pre-test questionnaire is attached in Appendix D.

Cognitive Dissonance

A cognitive dissonance measurement was used to find the arousal of cognitive dissonance caused by the juxtaposition of different countries as the COB, COC, or COM of a fashion brand. As discussed in the literature review, previous researchers have hardly focused on the effect of the differing country images of the COB, COC or COM of one brand. Even the few relevant studies focusing on these discrepancies in country image did not clearly measure whether such discrepancies caused any cognitive dissonance in consumers’ perceptions, but rather assumed that discrepancies in country image are less preferred by consumers than consistent country images (Chung et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2011). For this reason, the question of whether consumers really felt uncomfortable from discrepancies in country image, and whether changes in consumer attitudes really resulted from such discrepancies, was unclear in previous studies.

To address this limitation, this study measured whether cognitive dissonance is actually aroused by stimuli. For measuring cognitive dissonance, Sweeney et al.’s (2000) cognitive dissonance scale was adapted. The scale was originally developed to examine consumers’ post-purchase cognitive dissonance, and measures their cognitive dissonance

arousal based on three factors: emotional discomfort, perceived wisdom of product/brand choice, and concern over the justice of the choice. Because of its comprehensiveness and confirmed validity, the scale has been widely adapted and modified across a variety of contexts (e.g., Mao & Oppewal, 2010; Nadeem, 2007; O'Neill & Palmer, 2004). As Table 4 indicates, the cognitive dissonance scale consists of twenty-two items, some of which appear as follows: "About this (object), I feel uneasy" (i.e., emotional discomfort), "I wonder if I made the right choice (choosing this object)" (i.e., wisdom of product/brand choice), and "About this (object), I wonder if I was fooled" (i.e., concern over the justice of the choice) using the seven-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The scale reported acceptable validities and reliability (Sweeney et al., 2000).

Dependent Variables

Measurements for dependent variables, brand credibility and brand prestige, were borrowed from previous studies. First, brand credibility and brand prestige scales were adapted from Baek et al. (2010). Baek et al. (2010) extracted a six-item brand credibility scale from Erdem and Swait (1998), which includes statements such as, "This brand delivers what it promises," and "Product claims from this brand are believable." For brand prestige, they brought three questions from previous studies (Han & Terpstra, 1988; Steenkamp et al., 2003), including the following: "This brand is very prestigious," "This brand has high status," and "This brand is very upscale." Both the brand credibility scale and brand prestige scale reported acceptable reliabilities and validities in previous studies (Baek et al., 2010; Erdem & Swait, 2004; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Steenkamp et al., 2003). More details of the items of brand credibility and brand prestige measure are

provided in Table 4. Brand credibility and prestige were measured using a seven-point Likert scale in this study (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

Moderator

The scale of the moderating variable—clothing product involvement—was adopted from Michaelidou and Dibb’s (2006) fifteen-item Involvement with Clothes scale. The scale consists of fifteen questions, such as “It is true that clothing interests me a lot,” “Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me” and “Clothing is a topic about which I am different.” These statements are intended to measure one’s interest in, importance of, pleasure with, and signal and self-expressive values of clothes (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). More items are provided in Table 4. The scale uses the five-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), and revealed acceptable reliability and validity in the previous research (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006).

Data Collection

As mentioned before, this research comprises three parts of data collection: the pilot interview, the pre-test, and the actual experiments. The specific purpose and procedure of each part commences as follows.

Pilot Interview

For the first step, a pilot interview was conducted for the purpose of 1) selecting the final stimuli set (i.e., selecting between the with-model set and the without-model [objects image] set) and 2) validating the readability of scenarios that were going to be used in the pre-test and the experiments. In addition, since the cognitive dissonance scale

is adapted from a different context (i.e., the post-purchase context, Sweeney et al., 2000), the scale was reviewed by asking participants whether the items were readable and appropriate in describing their brand perceptions after hearing about the brands' cross-border M&A and offshoring practices.

For the pilot interview, four college student participants at a Southeastern university were recruited via classroom flyers after Institutional Review Board (IRB) review (see Appendix B for the IRB Official Letter). A \$10 retail gift card was provided for each participant as compensation for participation. The interview was conducted in a group discussion format for about forty minutes inside a study room at the school library, with the researcher acting as moderator. In the discussion, the moderator provided a brief introduction about the purpose of the study, IRB review, and the overall procedure of the interview. The moderator then showed the two image sets and scenarios to the participants and asked them to discuss freely about those stimuli. In order to facilitate discourse, the moderator also asked questions such as, "In which set (i.e., between the with-model set and the without-model set) do you see a clearer difference between the luxury brand image and the mass market brand image?" and "How do you feel about this brand's marketing practices (that are described in the scenario)?" The sample questions used during the pilot interview are provided in Appendix C. The interview was audio-recorded with the participants' agreement and transcribed verbatim.

Pre-Test

Following the pilot interview, a pre-test was conducted in a survey format for several purposes: 1) to validate the selection of countries—Italy and China—by measuring their country images as sources of fashion brands; 2) to validate the image stimuli by measuring whether the luxury brand image is perceived as upscale and whether the mass market brand image is perceived as accessible to everyone; 3) and to validate the measurement scales used in the study. For the first and the third purposes, the aforementioned country image scale and measurements of cognitive dissonance, brand credibility, brand prestige, and clothing product involvement were used, as provided in Table 4. For the second purpose, validating the image stimuli, the author developed three questions. Regarding luxury brand image, some questions included: “Does the given fashion brand look luxurious?”, “Does the given fashion brand appear to be upscale?”, and “Do the products of the given fashion brand appear to be expensive?”. Concerning mass market brand image, questions included: “Does the given fashion brand look casual?”, “Does the given fashion brand appear *not* to be upscale?”, and “Do the products of the given fashion brand appear to be affordable?”. A five-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) was used for both sets of questions. The pre-test survey questionnaire is provided in Appendix D.

For the pre-test, online survey responses were collected from 30 college students at a Southeastern university after IRB review. The participants were recruited via classroom visits with the instructor’s approval and were provided with extra course credit as incentive. The pre-test survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

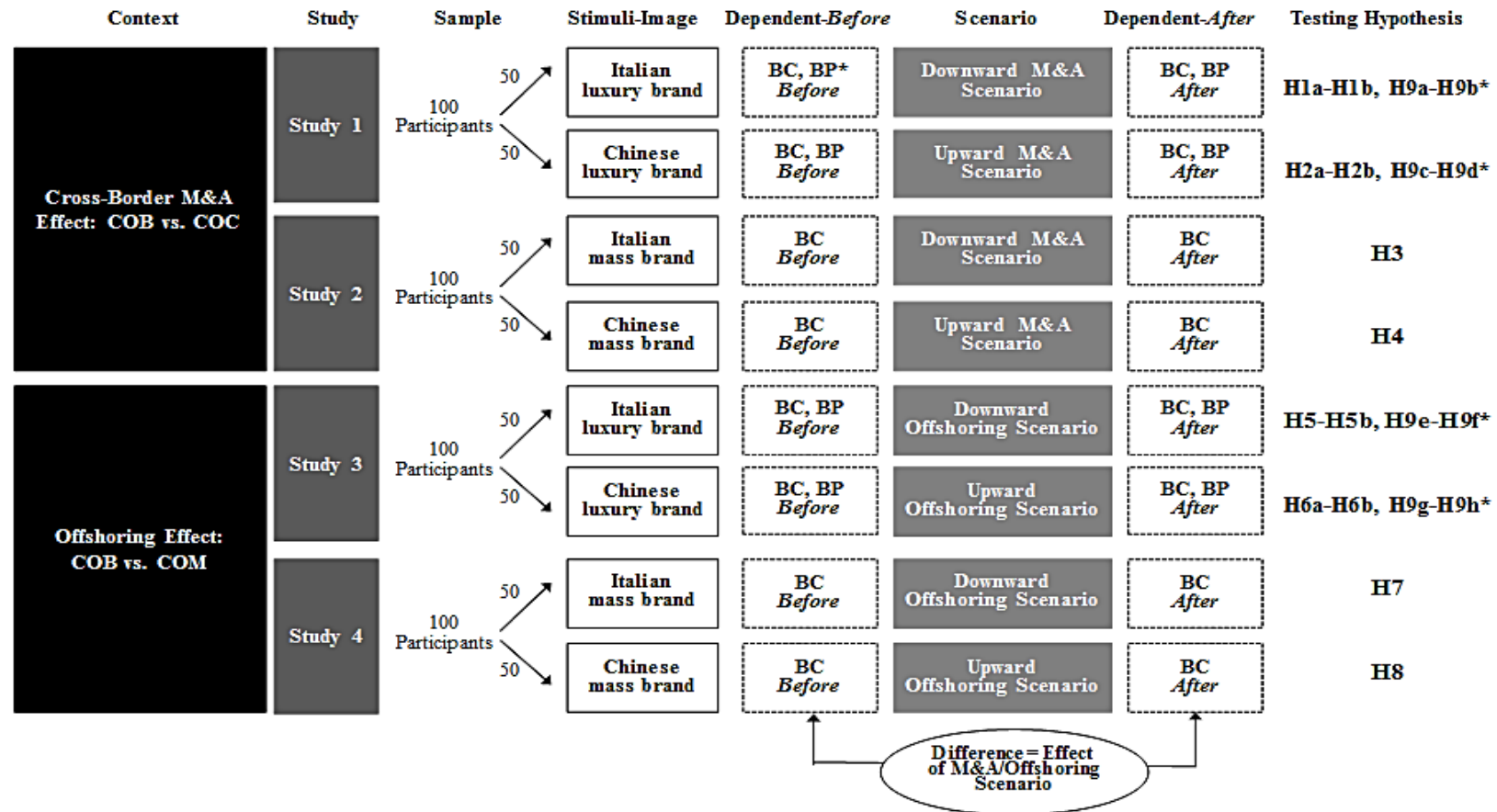
Experiments

Based on the results of the pre-test, four experimental studies were conducted to test the twenty developed hypotheses. A summary of the experimental design is provided in Figure 5. The four experiments examined a total of eight different situations wherein discrepancies in country image exist due to fashion brands' cross-border M&A or offshoring. These eight situations represent eight different combinations of 2 brand tiers (i.e., luxury versus mass) x 2 directions (i.e., downward/upward) x 2 cases resulting in discrepancies in country image (i.e., cross-border M&A/offshoring).

After IRB review, participants were recruited by contacting college course instructors at Southeastern universities. With the instructor's permission, the researcher then distributed the Qualtrics online survey of the experiments by either visiting the classroom or emailing the link to the instructor, based on the instructor's preference. In order to encourage participation, four retail gift cards valued at \$10 each were provided as incentives for a random drawing selection. The target sample size was a total of 400 college students: 100 students in each of the four experiments (i.e., Study 1 – Study 4) and 50 students for each of the eight cells (i.e., luxury/mass market brand x downward/upward x cross-border M&A/offshoring scenarios = 8 cases). Generally, 30 per cell is recommended for experimental research (Hair et al., 2010), and this study aimed to have a sample size per cell that is larger than this to still acquire enough responses after detecting unusable responses.

Figure 5

Summary of Experiments Design (Study 1 – Study 4)



Note. BC = Brand credibility, BP = Brand prestige; *H9a-H9h indicate the moderating effect of clothing product involvement.

Within-Subject Design

Overall, the four experiments have similar designs and procedures, except for differing image stimuli and scenarios. Each study possesses a within-subject design, wherein brand credibility and prestige (i.e., dependent variables) are measured twice: once *before* and once *after* the manipulation of scenarios about fashion brands' cross-border M&A/offshoring. This is to trigger discrepancies between the images of the COB, COC and/or COM. A within-subject experimental design has been chosen because it is useful to examine the effect of manipulation by comparing changes in dependent variables before the manipulation and after the manipulation (Malhotra, 2010). As such, in our experiments, the effect of manipulating such discrepancies in country image was measured by examining the differences of brand credibility and prestige *before* and *after* the manipulation.

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight scenario cells among Study 1 – Study 4 via *Survey Flow Randomization* function of the Qualtrics software. In each study, participants were provided with a questionnaire that includes a stimulus, scenario, and measurement items. Each questionnaire took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The questionnaires for Study 1 – Study 4 are provided in Appendix F – Appendix I.

For example, in Study 1, which examines the downward/upward luxury brand cross-border M&A cases, participants first saw an image representing a fictitious Italian/Chinese luxury brand and then were asked to evaluate the brand's perceived

credibility and prestige. Next, to manipulate the discrepancies between COB and COC, the participants were exposed to a newspaper article scenario that reports the downward/upward cross-border M&A that recently occurred between the given brand and another company from a foreign country. Afterwards, the given brand's perceived brand credibility and prestige among the participants were *re-measured* as the "after-manipulation" measure. The same procedure was applied to the other three studies (Study 2, Study 3, and Study 4), except that the image of the brand and the newspaper scenario were changed to fit each study's context. For example, in a procedure similar to that of Study 1, Study 3 provided offshoring scenarios instead of cross-border M&A scenarios; different scenarios that were used for each study are provided in Table 5. For Studies 2 and 4, the same format and procedure from Studies 1 and Study 3 were applied, but the stimuli of mass market brand images were used instead of the stimuli of luxury brand images. In addition, in Study 1 and Study 3, which examine luxury brand cases, participants' clothing product involvement levels were measured along with the dependent variables to test the moderating effect that is hypothesized in H9a-H9h. In all four studies, at the end of the questionnaire, brief demographic information was collected from participants, such as age, gender and their current academic years at the colleges.

Data Analysis of Experiments

Data were analyzed via SPSS Statistics 21.0. As preliminary analyses, descriptive statistics of the participants were obtained and exploratory factor analyses and reliability tests were performed to evaluate the measurements used. Normality and outliers of variables were assessed as necessary preliminary tests (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 5

Newspaper Scenarios Used in Experiments

Study	Change in Country Image	Scenario
Study 1: Luxury Brand Cross-Border M&A Cases	COB (Italy) → COC (China)	<i>Updated October 26, 2015 EST: by John Thomas (Business News)</i> == Corporate ownership of the luxury brand originated from Italy, <i>Signolilità</i> , is recently acquired by a Chinese investment group. Through the M&A (Merger and Acquisition) contract between <i>Signolilità</i> and the Chinese company, the Chinese company acquired control over the whole or a part of the business of <i>Signolilità</i> . Under the effect of this contract, the ownership of <i>Signolilità</i> now belongs to the Chinese company, not the original Italian owner.
	COB (China) → COC (Italy)	<i>Updated October 26, 2015 EST: by John Thomas (Business News)</i> == Corporate ownership of the luxury brand originated from China, <i>Kuochuo</i> , is recently acquired by an Italian investment group. Through the M&A (Merger and Acquisition) contract between <i>Kuochuo</i> and the Italian company, the Italian company acquired control over the whole or a part of the business of <i>Kuochuo</i> . Under the effect of this contract, the ownership of <i>Kuochuo</i> now belongs to the Italian company, not the original Chinese owner.
Study 2: Luxury Brand Offshoring Cases	COB (Italy) → COM (China)	<i>Updated October 26, 2015 EST: by John Thomas (Business News)</i> == <i>Signolilità</i> is an Italian luxury brand originated from Italy. Today the production of <i>Signolilità</i> 's products is mostly outsourced from China. Through the production contract between <i>Signolilità</i> and Chinese manufacturers, the production process of <i>Signolilità</i> products – such as cutting, sewing, and finishing – is being made in Chinese factories.
	COB (China) → COM (Italy)	<i>Updated October 26, 2015 EST: by John Thomas (Business News)</i> == <i>Kuochuo</i> is a Chinese luxury brand originated from China. Today the production of <i>Kuochuo</i> 's products is mostly outsourced from Italy. Through the production contract between <i>Kuochuo</i> and Italian manufacturers, the production process of <i>Kuochuo</i> products – such as cutting, sewing, and finishing – is being made in Italian factories.

Table 5

Newspaper Scenarios Used in Experiments (Cont'd)

Study	Change in Country Image	Scenario
Study 3: Mass Market Brand Cross- Border M&A Cases	COB (Italy) → COC (China)	<i>Updated October 26, 2015 EST: by John Thomas (Business News)</i> == Corporate ownership of the casual fashion brand originated from Italy, <i>LaVestiti</i> , is recently acquired by a Chinese investment group. Through the M&A (Merger and Acquisition) contract between <i>LaVestiti</i> and the Chinese company, the Chinese company acquired control over the whole or a part of the business of <i>LaVestiti</i> . Under the effect of this contract, the ownership of <i>LaVestiti</i> now belongs to the Chinese company, not the original Italian owner.
	COB (China) → COC (Italy)	<i>Updated October 26, 2015 EST: by John Thomas (Business News)</i> == Corporate ownership of the casual fashion brand originated from China, <i>XiuXianfu</i> , is recently acquired by an Italian investment group. Through the M&A (Merger and Acquisition) contract between <i>XiuXianfu</i> and the Italian company, the Italian company acquired control over the whole or a part of the business of <i>XiuXianfu</i> . Under the effect of this contract, the ownership of <i>XiuXianfu</i> now belongs to the Italian company, not the original Chinese owner.
Study 4: Mass Market Brand Offshoring Cases	COB (Italy) → COM (China)	<i>Updated October 26, 2015 EST: by John Thomas (Business News)</i> == <i>LaVestiti</i> is an Italian casual fashion brand originated from Italy. Today the production of <i>LaVestiti</i> 's products is mostly outsourced from China. Through the production contract between <i>LaVestiti</i> and Chinese manufacturers, the production process of <i>LaVestiti</i> products – such as cutting, sewing, and finishing – is being made in Chinese factories.
	COB (China) → COM (Italy)	<i>Updated October 26, 2015 EST: by John Thomas (Business News)</i> == <i>Xiuxianfu</i> is a Chinese casual fashion brand originated from China. Today the production of <i>Xiuxianfu</i> 's products is mostly outsourced from Italy. Through the production contract between <i>Xiuxianfu</i> and Italian manufacturers, the production process of <i>Xiuxianfu</i> products – such as cutting, sewing, and finishing – is being made in Italian factories.

In order to test H1a-H9h, repeated measure analyses of variance (= repeated measure ANOVA) were applied in Study 1 – Study 4. Data analysis methods for four studies are summarized in Figure 6. Repeated measure ANOVA was selected for its three advantages. First, ANOVA techniques in general prove beneficial in minimizing the probability of Type I Errors (i.e., rejecting a true null hypothesis), especially when juxtaposed with results from multiple t-tests comparing mean differences (Malhotra, 2010). Second, repeated measure ANOVA proves adequate in examining the changes in dependent variables before and after the manipulation of the independent variables (e.g., stimuli, scenarios, etc.), thereby tracking the effect of treatment in the participants' changes in attitude (Malhotra, 2010). Third, repeated measure ANOVA tests the effect of treatment within the same subject, thereby increasing the efficiency of sample size and decreasing the concerns of equivalency in treatments and violation of independence among samples that are high in the between-subject sample (Girden, 1992). Thus, repeated measure ANOVA was used to examine the mean differences between brand credibility and prestige *before* and *after* the manipulation of scenarios.

Furthermore, to test the moderating effects of clothing product involvement (H9a-H9f), the interaction effect of clothing product involvement as a covariate was examined in Study 1 and Study 3 (i.e., luxury brand contexts). For Study 2 and Study 4 (i.e., mass market brand contexts), covariate analysis was not performed because no moderating effect of clothing product involvement was hypothesized in the context of mass market brands.

Figure 6

Data Analysis Methods for Experiments

Context	Study	Stimuli-Image	Independent-Scenario	Dependent	Covariate	Testing Hypothesis	Analysis	
Cross-Border M&A Effect: COB vs. COC	Study 1	Italian luxury brand	Downward M&A Scenario	BC, BP	X	CPI	H1a-H1b, H9a-H9b*	Repeated Measure ANOVA & Interaction
		Chinese luxury brand	Upward M&A Scenario	BC, BP	X	CPI	H2a-H2b, H9c-H9d*	Repeated Measure ANOVA & Interaction
	Study 2	Italian mass brand	Downward M&A Scenario	BC			H3	Repeated Measure ANOVA
		Chinese mass brand	Upward M&A Scenario	BC			H4	Repeated Measure ANOVA
Offshoring Effect: COB vs. COM	Study 3	Italian luxury brand	Downward Offshoring Scenario	BC, BP	X	CPI	H5-H5b, H9e-H9f*	Repeated Measure ANOVA & Interaction
		Chinese luxury brand	Upward Offshoring Scenario	BC, BP	X	CPI	H6a-H6b, H9g-H9h*	Repeated Measure ANOVA & Interaction
	Study 4	Italian mass brand	Downward Offshoring Scenario	BC			H7	Repeated Measure ANOVA
		Chinese mass brand	Upward Offshoring Scenario	BC			H8	Repeated Measure ANOVA

Note. BC = Brand credibility, BP = Brand prestige, CPI = Clothing product involvement.

*H9a-H9h indicate the moderating effect of clothing product involvement.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the results of the data collection, pilot interview, pre-test, and actual experiments are reported. First, the results of the pilot interview and the pre-test that were conducted prior to the experiments are explained. Following this, the results of experiments testing twenty hypotheses (H1a-H9h) are provided, along with the methods of data analyses that were used for each hypothesis. At the end of the section, a summary of results for the hypotheses testing is also provided.

Results of Pilot Interview and Pre-Test

Pilot Interview Results

The four college students who participated in the pilot interview were female students aged between 19-21. The first purpose of the pilot interview was to select an image set to use in both the pre-test and the experiments between the two image sets (one image set with a model and the other set with store image). The participants found that the image set with a model, when compared to the set with store image, proved to have a clearer and more obvious contrast between the luxury brand image and the mass market brand image. The second purpose was to confirm the readability of scenarios and the contextual appropriateness of cognitive dissonance scale. The participants did not report any problems with reading and understanding all eight scenarios and were able to correctly explain what occurred in the scenarios after reading them; thus, the readability

of the scenarios was validated. For the cognitive dissonance scale, the participants did not report any problems with most items in terms of their readability and contextual appropriateness, except for a few items (e.g., “Down”, “Pain”, “Sick”, etc.). The transcript of the pilot interview is provided in Appendix E. Based on these results, the image set with a model and the cognitive dissonance scale was continuously used in the pre-test with no changes. Since the modification of the existing scale must be accompanied by very careful and conservative approaches (Hair et al., 2010), all items of the cognitive dissonance scale were kept at this stage to undergo further statistical validation processes with larger sizes of data in the pre-test and the experiments.

Pre-Test Results

A total of 30 college students participated in the pre-test. Most of them were female students (i.e., male = 4, female = 26) with an average age of about nineteen years old (mean = 19.4). The results of the pre-test validated the selection of countries, image manipulations, and measurement scales. Every measurement reported acceptable reliabilities that ranged from .75-.98, as indicated in Table 6 (Hair et al., 2010). For the validation of country selection, it was confirmed that Italy is perceived as a high fashion image country and that China is deemed as a low fashion image country. In the paired sample t-test presented in Table 7, Italy reported a higher score in country image within the fashion category (mean = 5.77) than did China (mean = 3.44), and the mean difference between the two countries was significant ($t = 7.40, p = .00$).

Table 6

Pre-Test: Results of Scale Reliability Tests

<i>Scale (#of Items)</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>
Country Image (6)			
Italy	5.77	.71	.83
China	3.44	1.48	.92
Image Validation Items ¹			
Luxury brand image (3)	4.66	.66	.93
Mass market brand image (3)	4.23	.82	.75
Cognitive Dissonance (22)	3.78	1.27	.97
Brand Credibility (6)	5.30	1.02	.94
Brand Prestige (3)	5.77	1.23	.98
Clothing Product Involvement (15)	4.23	.50	.79

N=30, all values were rounded up to two decimal places.

¹ The pre-test questions validating whether the luxury brand image is perceived as a luxury brand, and the mass market brand image is perceived as a mass market brand (see Appendix D).

Table 7

Pre-Test: Results of T-Tests for Country/Image Selection Validation

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Italy's Country Image in Fashion	5.77	.71	7.40	.00*
China's Country Image in Fashion	3.44	1.48		
Luxury Brand Image	4.66	.66	14.69	.00*
Mass Market Brand Image	4.23	.82		

N=30, * $\alpha < .05$, all values were rounded up to two decimal places.

The validation of images confirmed that the selected luxury brand image is perceived as a luxury brand, and the chosen mass market brand image is perceived as a mass market brand. The participants strongly agreed that the luxury brand image presents a luxury brand (mean = 4.66), and the mass market brand image depicts a mass market brand (mean = 4.23). The difference between the luxury brand image and the mass market brand image was significant, further supporting the selection of images ($t = 14.69$, $p = .00$) (see Table 7).

Based on these results, the measurements were used in the actual experiments, as they indicated satisfactory reliabilities. The two selected countries (i.e., Italy and China) and the two image stimuli with a model (i.e., luxury brand image and mass market brand image) were used in the experiments, since the pre-test confirmed them to be valid contrasting sets.

Results of Experiments

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive Statistics

For the actual experiments (Study 1 – Study 4), a total of 470 responses were collected from over fifteen classes at Southeastern universities. Data were collected from classes spanning a variety of departments, including Business, Management, International Business, Retailing, Design, Textiles, Arts, and Computer Sciences. Table 8 summarizes the numbers of collected and usable responses that remained for data analyses. Among the 470 responses collected, 44 responses were excluded from data analyses for one or more of the following reasons: (1) the participant was over 30 years of age and thereby

not representative of the college student sample (Carpenter & Fairhurst, 2005), (2) the response was incomplete or not recorded due to a system error, and/or (3) the response was not attentive (e.g., 1, 1, 1, ... for all questions) (Dillman et al., 2008). Incomplete or insincere responses could violate the normality of survey data and distort the results of the data analyses; therefore, these cases need to be assessed for deletion prior to data analyses (Dillman et al., 2008). Deletion of the 44 unusable responses resulted in a remaining total of 426 usable responses. Table 8 explains how many responses were deleted and how many remained for each of the eight cells in Study 1 – Study 4. As Table 8 presents, usable responses were fairly distributed across the eight cells, with numbers between 50-57 for each cell.

Table 9 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the participants. The average age was between 21-22 for each cell, and the average age of the total 426 participants was 22 years. In terms of gender, female participants comprised the majority (i.e., male = 81 (19.0%); female = 339 (79.6%)). This trend appeared in all of the eight cells, as female participants composed 70-80% of the total participants while males composed about 10-20%. In terms of academic year, participants were mostly undergraduate sophomores, juniors, and seniors (i.e., sophomores = 132 (32.0%); juniors = 119 (27.9%); seniors = 82 (19.2%)), with relatively small numbers of freshmen (= 53 (12.4%)) and graduate students (= 34 (8.0%)). This trend appeared similarly in all of the eight cells in Study 1 – Study 4.

Table 8

Data Collection Results of Experiments

<i>Study</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Collected</i>	<i>Unusable</i>	<i>Usable</i>
Study 1	Luxury Brand Downward M&A	59	4	55
	Luxury Brand Upward M&A	56	4	52
Study 2	Mass Market Brand Downward M&A	61	5	56
	Mass Market Brand Upward M&A	57	6	51
Study 3	Luxury Brand Downward Offshoring	60	5	55
	Luxury Brand Upward Offshoring	64	7	57
Study 4	Mass Market Brand Downward Offshoring	56	6	50
	Mass Market Brand Upward Offshoring	56	6	50
Missing	System Error	1	1	0
Total	All Participants	470	44	426

Total Usable Response Rate = $426/470 = 90.6\%$

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of the Experiments Participants

<i>Study</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Age¹</i>	<i>Gender² Frequency (%)</i>	<i>Year² Frequency (%)</i>
Study 1	Luxury Brand Downward M&A	55	21.9	M: 10 (18.2) F: 44 (80.0)	Freshman: 7 (12.7) Sophomore: 17 (30.9) Junior: 10 (18.2) Senior: 16 (29.1) Graduate: 4 (7.3)
	Luxury Brand Upward M&A	52	22.5	M: 11 (21.2) F: 40 (76.9)	Freshman: 3 (5.8) Sophomore: 15 (28.8) Junior: 17 (32.7) Senior: 9 (17.3) Graduate: 7 (13.5)
Study 2	Mass Market Brand Downward M&A	56	22.6	M: 12 (21.4) F: 43 (76.8)	Freshman: 4 (7.1) Sophomore: 18 (32.1) Junior: 15 (26.8) Senior: 13 (23.2) Graduate: 5 (8.9)
	Mass Market Brand Upward M&A	51	21.7	M: 14 (27.5) F: 37 (72.5)	Freshman: 6 (11.8) Sophomore: 18 (35.3) Junior: 14 (27.5) Senior: 7 (13.7) Graduate: 6 (11.8)
Study 3	Luxury Brand Downward Offshoring	55	22.3	M: 10 (18.2) F: 45 (81.8)	Freshman: 10 (18.2) Sophomore: 11 (20.0) Junior: 23 (41.8) Senior: 7 (12.7) Graduate: 4 (7.3)
	Luxury Brand Upward Offshoring	57	21.4	M: 9 (15.8) F: 47 (82.5)	Freshman: 13 (22.8) Sophomore: 16 (28.1) Junior: 15 (26.3) Senior: 10 (17.5) Graduate: 2 (3.5)
Study 4	Mass Market Brand Downward Offshoring	50	22.5	M: 4 (8.0) F: 46 (92.0)	Freshman: 7 (14.0) Sophomore: 16 (32.0) Junior: 13 (26.0) Senior: 10 (20.0) Graduate: 4 (8.0)
	Mass Market Brand Upward Offshoring	50	21.4	M: 11 (22.0) F: 37 (74.0)	Freshman: 3 (6.0) Sophomore: 21 (42.0) Junior: 12 (24.0) Senior: 10 (20.0) Graduate: 2 (4.0)
Total	All Participants	426	22.0	M: 81 (19.0) F: 339 (79.6)	Freshman: 53 (12.4) Sophomore: 132 (31.0) Junior: 119 (27.9) Senior: 82 (19.2) Graduate: 34 (8.0)

¹ Age indicates the mean age of the participants in each group.

² The total percentage of some variables is slightly less than 100%; these cases involved 1-2 missing values.

Evaluation of Measurements

Prior to hypotheses testing, the measurements were evaluated again alongside the data of the actual experiments to confirm the construct validities and reliabilities of the measurements. First, for the two constructs with a dimensional structure—cognitive dissonance and clothing product involvement—exploratory factor analyses (EFA) with varimax rotation was performed by applying principal component analysis to identify the dimensions of the constructs. Eigenvalues of one or greater were retained, and factor loadings greater than .50 were deemed appropriate for inclusion (Hair et al., 2010). Table 10 provides the results of the EFA. The results on the cognitive dissonance construct revealed three factors: Emotional I (mean = 3.57; Eigenvalue = 5.50; variance explained = 25.0%), Wisdom/Justice of Brand Choice (mean = 4.58; Eigenvalue = 5.26; variance explained = 23.9%), and Emotional II (mean = 2.80; Eigenvalue = 5.16; variance explained = 23.5%). No item was deducted, as all of them fell into at least one factor with factor loadings greater than .50. Compared to the original dimensionality of the construct, the items of the Emotional dimension were divided into two factors, and the two dimensions of Wisdom of Brand Choice and Concern over the Justice of Choice were combined as one in our data. All three factors reported acceptable reliabilities (Cronbach's α = .93-.96), and the total variance explained by these three factors was 72.37% (see Table 10). Additionally, Table 11 provides an inter-item correlation matrix of the cognitive dissonance scale.

Table 10

Results of EFA on the Cognitive Dissonance and Clothing Product Involvement Scales

Scale	Variables (#of Items)	Mean	SD	Factor loadings	Eigen value	Variance explained	Cronbach α
Cognitive Dissonance	<i>Factor 1: Emotional I (10)</i>	3.57 [†]			5.50	25.0%	.94
	Resent	3.66	1.54	.78			
	Despair	3.59	1.48	.78			
	Angry	3.30	1.50	.74			
	Disappointed	4.19	1.68	.74			
	Annoyed	3.72	1.62	.69			
	Uneasy	3.91	1.58	.68			
	Down	3.42	1.51	.66			
	Frustrated	3.47	1.63	.64			
	Hollow	3.31	1.45	.61			
	Scared	3.15	1.47	.57			
	<i>Factor 2: Wisdom/Justice of Brand Choice (7)</i>	4.58 [†]			5.26	23.9%	.93
	I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.	4.50	1.57	.86			
	I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.	4.62	1.53	.84			
	I wonder whether I should buy this brand.	4.58	1.60	.81			
	About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.	4.71	1.64	.81			
	I wonder if I really need this brand.	4.56	1.56	.80			
	About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.	4.46	1.59	.79			
	About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.	4.63	1.55	.76			
	<i>Factor 3: Emotional II (5)</i>	2.80 [†]			5.16	23.5%	.96
	Depressed	2.78	1.46	.89			
	Agony	2.77	1.48	.89			
	Sick	2.79	1.47	.88			
	Pain	2.81	1.39	.87			
	Furious	2.87	1.51	.83			

Note. Total Variance Explained: Cognitive Dissonance = 72.37%; Clothing Product Involvement = 58.28%.

[†] indicates the mean of the whole factor. All values were rounded up to two decimal places.

Table 10

Results of EFA on the Cognitive Dissonance and Clothing Product Involvement Scales (Cont'd)

Scale	Variables (#of Items)	Mean	SD	Factor loadings	Eigen value	Variance explained	Cronbach α
16 Clothing Product Involvement	<i>Factor 1: Pleasure (6)</i>	4.18 [†]			4.16	27.74%	.89
	I enjoy buying clothes for myself.	4.29	.94	.84			
	It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.	4.14	1.04	.81			
	Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	4.20	.94	.76			
	I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	3.91	1.12	.66			
	It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	4.22	1.05	.64			
	Clothes help me express who I am.	4.29	.92	.60			
	<i>Factor 2: Importance (5)</i>	3.81 [†]			2.73	18.22%	.77
	Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	3.82	1.01	.75			
	I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.	3.78	.96	.67			
	I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	4.03	.95	.62			
	Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	3.46	1.13	.61			
	I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	3.97	1.02	.52			
	<i>Factor 3: Interest/Self-Expression (4)</i>	3.73 [†]			1.85	12.33%	.62
	The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.*	3.43	1.24	.73			
	Clothing is not part of my self-image.*	3.52	1.29	.72			
	I am not at all interested in clothes.*	4.32	1.04	.57			
	Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.*	3.64	1.23	.52			

Note. Total Variance Explained: Cognitive Dissonance = 72.37%; Clothing Product Involvement = 58.28%

[†] indicates the mean of the whole factor. All values were rounded up to two decimal places.

Table 11

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix of Cognitive Dissonance Scale

	I1*	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8	I9	I10	I11	I12	I13	I14	I15	I16	I17	I18	I19	I20	I21	I22
I1	1.00																					
I2	.80	1.00																				
I3	.68	.63	1.00																			
I4	.64	.59	.59	1.00																		
I5	.64	.53	.70	.61	1.00																	
I6	.59	.56	.66	.61	.61	1.00																
I7	.58	.58	.73	.56	.66	.63	1.00															
I8	.62	.52	.74	.58	.81	.63	.64	1.00														
I9	.54	.57	.66	.51	.53	.57	.59	.57	1.00													
I10	.55	.62	.61	.46	.48	.54	.58	.53	.70	1.00												
I11	.38	.31	.32	.44	.44	.43	.32	.41	.26	.28	1.00											
I12	.36	.30	.30	.42	.41	.40	.33	.41	.27	.26	.80	1.00										
I13	.35	.31	.29	.43	.37	.42	.29	.37	.30	.26	.72	.77	1.00									
I14	.38	.30	.32	.47	.51	.47	.30	.45	.27	.27	.67	.65	.56	1.00								
I15	.31	.26	.28	.41	.38	.39	.29	.38	.31	.27	.70	.69	.80	.54	1.00							
I16	.34	.29	.34	.42	.46	.44	.27	.42	.25	.23	.65	.57	.51	.80	.54	1.00						
I17	.37	.32	.36	.42	.41	.43	.29	.38	.27	.29	.61	.56	.51	.79	.49	.80	1.00					
I18	.49	.46	.57	.29	.45	.43	.60	.53	.57	.56	.18	.15	.17	.16	.21	.18	.18	1.00				
I19	.44	.42	.56	.32	.43	.41	.58	.55	.54	.56	.16	.15	.14	.17	.17	.15	.16	.84	1.00			
I20	.46	.45	.62	.33	.47	.43	.58	.56	.57	.60	.20	.20	.19	.16	.20	.17	.18	.83	.83	1.00		
I21	.49	.48	.59	.33	.50	.44	.59	.57	.56	.63	.21	.16	.19	.16	.22	.18	.18	.84	.82	.83	1.00	
I22	.51	.47	.64	.37	.52	.49	.54	.61	.53	.58	.24	.20	.23	.23	.28	.25	.24	.81	.80	.81	.79	1.00

*I1-I22 are listed by the same order of the items listed in Table 10.

Table 12

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix of Clothing Product Involvement Scale

	I1*	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8	I9	I10	I11	I12	I13	I14	I15
I1	1.00														
I2	.80	1.00													
I3	.73	.63	1.00												
I4	.54	.53	.58	1.00											
I5	.55	.53	.46	.45	1.00										
I6	.58	.55	.60	.48	.52	1.00									
I7	.41	.39	.36	.30	.41	.42	1.00								
I8	.42	.41	.43	.34	.32	.45	.46	1.00							
I9	.55	.59	.47	.45	.51	.57	.54	.59	1.00						
I10	.43	.46	.38	.38	.37	.40	.44	.51	.54	1.00					
I11	.21	.21	.30	.21	.26	.31	.41	.21	.25	.11	1.00				
I12	.09	.07	.04	.08	.14	.20	.14	.05	.18	.10	.11	1.00			
I13	.13	.09	.14	.14	.14	.16	.08	.07	.14	.07	.11	.38	1.00		
I14	.42	.36	.32	.25	.50	.44	.31	.24	.39	.17	.20	.26	.26	1.00	
I15	.29	.33	.25	.20	.35	.22	.17	.11	.27	.15	.11	.18	.24	.45	1.00

*I1-I15 are listed by the same order of the items listed in Table 10.

As Table 10 presents, the results of the EFA on the clothing product involvement construct also provided three factors. They were: Pleasure (mean = 4.18; Eigenvalue = 4.16; variance explained = 27.74%), Importance (mean = 3.81; Eigenvalue = 2.73; variance explained = 18.22%), and Interest/Self-expression (mean = 3.73; Eigenvalue = 1.85; variance explained = 12.33%). Similarly to cognitive dissonance, no item was considered for deletion, as all items fell into at least one of the three factors with factor loadings greater than .50. When compared to the original dimensions, Pleasure and Importance dimensions remained the same, while the Interest, Self-Expressive Value, and Signal Value dimensions combined into one factor in our data. All of the three factors revealed acceptable reliabilities (Cronbach's α = .62-.89), and the total variance of the participants' clothing product involvement explained by these three factors was 58.28% (See Table 10). Additionally, Table 12 provides an inter-item correlation matrix of the clothing product involvement scale.

Following the EFA, reliability analyses were conducted with uni-dimensionality on the measurements used in the research: brand credibility (before-measure and after-measure) and brand prestige (before-measure and after-measure). Table 13 provides Cronbach's alpha values of the measurements, as well as their mean and standard deviation values. All measurements revealed acceptable reliabilities, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .94- to .97 (Hair et al., 2010). Table 14 and Table 15 present the inter-item correlation matrices for the brand credibility scale and the brand prestige scale, respectively.

Table 13

Results of Scale Reliability Tests

<i>Scale (#of Items)</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>
Brand Credibility			
Before-Measure (6)	4.81	1.27	.94
After-Measure (6)	3.83	1.31	.94
Brand Prestige			
Before-Measure (3)	4.45	1.85	.97
After-Measure (3)	3.70	1.60	.95

Note. All values were rounded up to two decimal places.

Table 14

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix of Brand Credibility Scale

	This brand would deliver what it promises.	Product claims for this brand would be believable.	I expect this brand to keep its promises.	This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	This brand has a name you can trust.	This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.
<i>Before</i>						
This brand would deliver what it promises.	1.00					
Product claims for this brand would be believable.	.80	1.00				
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	.77	.81	1.00			
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	.76	.76	.81	1.00		
This brand has a name you can trust.	.65	.64	.66	.74	1.00	
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	.72	.73	.75	.80	.74	1.00
<i>After</i>						
This brand would deliver what it promises.	1.00					
Product claims for this brand would be believable.	.77	1.00				
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	.67	.76	1.00			
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	.69	.76	.78	1.00		
This brand has a name you can trust.	.66	.72	.63	.70	1.00	
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	.72	.77	.73	.80	.74	1.00

Table 15

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix of Brand Prestige Scale

	This brand is very prestigious.	This brand has high status.	This brand is very upscale.
<i>Before</i>			
This brand is very prestigious.	1.00		
This brand has high status.	.90	1.00	
This brand is very upscale.	.88	.94	1.00
<i>After</i>			
This brand is very prestigious.	1.00		
This brand has high status.	.88	1.00	
This brand is very upscale.	.85	.89	1.00

Assessing Normality and Detecting Outliers

The normality of variables and existence of outliers were also assessed as part of a preliminary analysis prior to repeated measure ANOVA testing. For this purpose, visual inspections of descriptive statistics – Q-Q plots, box plots, and extreme values – were performed on all variables. Q-Q plots provide a visual pattern of data distribution, with a linear shape indicating that the data is normally distributed (Hair et al., 2010). In addition, box plots and extreme values indicate the existence of outliers that are distant from the normal distribution of data (Hair et al., 2010). The inspection of Q-Q plots, box plots, and extreme values revealed that every variable is fairly normally distributed in the data and there are no detected patterns of outliers that would skew the results of statistical analyses.

Country Image Manipulation Check

For the manipulation check, the differences in country images between Italy and China regarding the fashion brands were examined. Based on the category-origin image scale (Josiassen et al., 2012) from the pre-test, Italy and China's country images were measured and paired-sample t-tests were conducted to confirm that these two countries are perceived as significantly different among consumers. As Table 16 presents, the images of the two countries proved to be significantly disparate among consumers in all eight cells; Italy was perceived with a significantly more positive image than China was in the fashion brand category (Italy mean = 5.09-5.58; China mean = 3.44-3.09, p -values = .00). Thus, it was confirmed that the participants perceived Italy as a high fashion image country and China as a low fashion image country.

Table 16

Country Image Manipulation Check: Results of Paired-Sample T-Tests

<i>Group</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Luxury Brand Downward M&A	Italy	5.57	.90	8.79	.00*
	China	3.91	1.07		
Luxury Brand Upward M&A	Italy	5.49	.97	6.75	.00*
	China	4.04	1.14		
Mass Market Brand Downward M&A	Italy	5.58	.95	8.58	.00*
	China	3.77	1.06		
Mass Market Brand Upward M&A	Italy	5.16	1.00	6.52	.00*
	China	3.87	.96		
Luxury Brand Downward Offshoring	Italy	5.37	.86	7.79	.00*
	China	3.97	1.03		
Luxury Brand Upward Offshoring	Italy	5.47	.88	6.39	.00*
	China	4.09	1.08		
Mass Market Brand Downward Offshoring	Italy	5.09	1.10	6.26	.00*
	China	3.44	1.16		
Mass Market Brand Upward Offshoring	Italy	5.11	1.05	5.22	.00*
	China	3.87	1.07		

N=30, * $\alpha < .05$, all values were rounded up to two decimal places.

Confirmation of Cognitive Dissonance

To conclude the preliminary analyses, the mean values of cognitive dissonance across the eight cells (i.e., 2 brand tiers x downward/upward cases x M&A/offshoring cases) were calculated to confirm that cognitive dissonance was indeed engendered in the participants. Table 17 provides the mean values of cognitive dissonance across the eight cells. These mean values were greater than the median (= 3.5) of the 7-pt Likert scale used to measure cognitive dissonance. Therefore, there is evidence that the participants tend to experience cognitive dissonance after being exposed to the scenarios.

Table 17

Mean Values of Cognitive Dissonance across Cases

<i>Study</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Total	Total	4.58	1.32
Study 1	Luxury Brand Downward M&A	4.75	1.43
	Luxury Brand Upward M&A	4.43	1.35
Study 2	Mass Market Brand Downward M&A	5.10	1.15
	Mass Market Brand Upward M&A	4.42	1.47
Study 3	Luxury Brand Downward Offshoring	4.55	1.20
	Luxury Brand Upward Offshoring	4.39	1.19
Study 4	Mass Market Brand Downward Offshoring	4.76	1.38
	Mass Market Brand Upward Offshoring	4.21	1.24

Note. Cognitive dissonance was measured by the 7-pt Likert scale in which median = 3.5.
All values were rounded up to two decimal places.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

Repeated Measure Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to test the twenty hypotheses developed (H1a-H9h), which were examined through four experiments (Study 1 – Study 4). For Study 1 and Study 3, both of which pertain to the luxury brand context, the interaction effect of clothing product involvement was also examined to test the moderating effect of clothing product involvement. The results were as follows.

Study 1: Luxury Brands' Cross-Border M&A (H1a-H2b)

Study 1, which tested H1a-H2b, examined the effect of discrepancies in image between the COB and COC in cross-border M&A scenarios on consumers' perceived brand credibility and brand prestige in the context of luxury brands. As Table 9 indicates, 55 participants were exposed to a downward M&A scenario describing a Chinese company's acquisition of the Italian luxury brand, *Signoliita*, in order to test H1a and H1b. On the other hand, 52 participants were provided with an upward M&A scenario describing an Italian company's recent acquisition of the Chinese luxury brand *Kuochuo*, in order to test H2a and H2b.

Table 18 provides the results of the repeated measure ANOVA testing of H1a-H2b. Throughout the tests, there appeared no issue of sphericity, since the Mauchly's W tests revealed that the assumption of sphericity had not been violated (i.e., $W = 1.00$, p -values greater than .05). This means that the variances between any pairs of the time intervals are equal, and so the treatment effect can be examined by comparing changes in the dependent variables by time intervals (Boik, 1981). First, in the case of a luxury

brand's downward cross-border M&A, the perceived brand credibility of the Italian brand *Signolilità* significantly decreased after the participants read the scenario of the Chinese company's acquisition of the brand (mean = 5.43 \rightarrow 3.76, $F_{(1,54)} = 66.54$, $p = .00$). The analysis revealed a large effect size ($\eta^2 = .55$) and power (= 1.00). The participants had previously evaluated the perceived brand credibility of *Signolilità* as being relatively high before they were exposed to the scenario; the mean value of *before*-brand credibility measure was 5.43, much higher than the median (= 3.5) of the 7-pt scales used. However, after reading the scenario of *Signolilità* becoming acquired by a Chinese investment company, they assessed the perceived credibility of the same brand significantly lower than before (*after*-brand credulity = 3.76). This result provides support for H1a, which argues that a luxury brand's downward M&A lowers the brand's perceived credibility among consumers.

A similar result was found for brand prestige. The perceived brand prestige of *Signolilità* significantly decreased after the participants were provided with a scenario detailing the Chinese company's acquisition of the brand (mean = 5.96 \rightarrow 3.76, $F_{(1,54)} = 82.72$, $p = .00$). The analysis reported great effect size ($\eta^2 = .61$) and power (= 1.00). Similarly to brand credibility, the participants originally evaluated the perceived brand credibility of *Signolilità* relatively high (*before*-brand prestige = 5.96), but after reading the scenario about a Chinese company's acquisition of the brand, they assessed the perceived prestige of the same brand significantly lower than before (*after*-brand credulity = 3.76). This result supports H1b, which hypothesizes that a luxury brand's downward M&A lowers the brand's prestige. Therefore, in the case of a luxury brand's

downward cross-border M&A, H1a and H1b find support because both brand credibility and brand prestige significantly decreased after knowledge was obtained about the downward M&A scenario.

For the case of a luxury brand's upward cross-border M&A, which tested H2a-H2b, the perceived brand credibility of the Chinese brand *Kuochuo* did not significantly change after the participants read the scenario of an Italian company's acquisition of the brand ($F_{(1,51)} = .82, p = .37$). Based on this result, H2a was not supported because the provision of an upward M&A scenario did not increase brand credibility, as was assumed in H2a. The testing of brand prestige also revealed a similar finding. The perceived brand prestige of *Kuochuo* did not significantly increase after the participants were provided with the upward M&A scenario, thereby not supporting H2b ($F_{(1,51)} = .68, p = .41$), which had hypothesized that an upward M&A would enhance brand prestige. Table 18 summarizes these results.

Table 18

Study 1: Repeated Measure ANOVA Results Testing H1a-H2b

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>df, error df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Effect size</i>	<i>Power</i>	<i>Hypothesis Testing</i>
<i>Luxury Brand Downward Cross-Border M&A</i>								
Brand Credibility	Before: 5.43 After: 3.76	1.10 1.14	66.54	1, 54	.00*	.55	1.00	H1a Supported
Brand Prestige	Before: 5.96 After: 3.76	1.13 1.51	82.72	1, 54	.00*	.61	1.00	H1b Supported
<i>Luxury Brand Upward Cross-Border M&A</i>								
Brand Credibility	Before: 5.03 After: 4.27	1.26 1.42	.82	1, 51	.37	.02	.14	H2a Not Supported
Brand Prestige	Before: 5.47 After: 4.67	1.30 1.38	.68	1, 51	.41	.01	.13	H2b Not Supported

* $\alpha < .05$, all values were rounded up to two decimal places.

Study 2: Mass Market Brands' Cross-Border M&A (H3-H4)

Study 2 was developed to test H3-H4, which examine the effect of discrepancies between the images of COB and COC on brand credibility among mass market brands, by manipulating downward/upward cross-border M&A scenarios. As Table 9 indicates, 56 participants were exposed to the downward scenario of a Chinese company's acquisition of the Italian mass market brand *LaVestiti*, in order to test H3. In addition, 51 participants were exposed to the upward scenario explaining an Italian company's acquisition of the Chinese mass market brand *Xiuxianfu*, in order to test H4.

Table 19 reveals the results of repeated measure ANOVA tests performed on H3-H4. There was no sphericity issue in any of the tests, as the Mauchly's W tests provided satisfactory results (i.e., $W = 1.00$, p -values greater than .05). First, in the case of a mass market brand's downward M&A, H3 was not supported because there was in fact a significant change in brand credibility, while H3 hypothesized no such significant influence. The participants' perceived brand credibility of *LaVestiti* significantly decreased after they read the scenario of a Chinese company's recent acquisition of the brand via cross-border M&A (mean = 4.42 \rightarrow 3.53, $F_{(1,55)} = 24.19$, $p = .00$). Although H3 had anticipated that a downward M&A of mass market brands would not influence the brand's perceived credibility, the participants evaluated *LaVestiti*'s brand credibility significantly lower than they had before (*before*-brand credibility = 4.42), upon learning of the Chinese company's acquisition (*after*-brand credibility = 3.53). The effect size ($\eta^2 = .31$) of the analysis was medium and power ($= 1.00$) was large.

Table 19

Study 2: Repeated Measure ANOVA Results Testing H3-H4

	Mean	SD	F-value	df, error df	p-value	Effect size	Power	Hypothesis Testing
Mass Market Brand Downward Cross-Border M&A								
Brand Credibility	Before: 4.42 After: 3.53	1.08 1.11	24.19	1, 55	.00*	.31	1.00	H3 Not Supported
Mass Market Brand Upward Cross-Border M&A								
Brand Credibility	Before: 4.10 After: 3.85	1.35 1.24	1.38	1, 50	.25	.03	.21	H4 Supported

* $\alpha < .05$, all values were rounded up to two decimal places.

In case of a mass market brand's upward M&A, H4 was supported because there was no significant change on brand credibility due to the manipulation of discrepancies between the COB and COC. As Table 19 describes, the participants' perceived brand credibility of *Xiuxianfu* did not significantly decrease after they read the scenario of an Italian company's acquisition of the brand ($F_{(1,50)} = 1.38, p = .25$), as H4 had expected.

Study 3: Luxury Brands' Offshoring (H5a-H6b)

Study 3 examined the effect of discrepancies in image between the COB and COM, as manipulated by offshoring scenarios, on consumers' perceived brand credibility and brand prestige in the context of luxury brands, thus testing H5a-H6b. As Table 9 indicates, 55 participants were exposed to the downward offshoring scenario, which describes the Italian luxury brand *Signolilità*'s offshoring practices in China, in order to test H5a and H5b. In addition, 57 participants were informed of an upward offshoring scenario explaining the Chinese luxury brand *Kuochuo*'s offshoring practices in Italy, in order to test H6a and H6b.

The results of repeated measure ANOVA testing on H5-H6 are summarized in Table 20. Throughout all of the tests summarized, no sphericity issue was detected, since the Mauchly's W tests returned satisfactory results (i.e., $W = 1.00$, p -values greater than .05). First, in case of a luxury brand's downward offshoring, the perceived brand credibility of *Signolilità* significantly decreased after the participants read the scenario of the brand's offshoring practices in China (mean = 5.43 \rightarrow 3.37, $F_{(1,54)} = 124.15, p = .00$). The results revealed a very large effect size ($\eta^2 = .70$) and power (= 1.00), as Table 20 indicates. The participants first evaluated the perceived brand credibility of the Italian

luxury brand *Signolilità* as being relatively high (mean = 5.43) when compared to the median (= 3.5). However, after they found that the products of *Signolilità* are actually made in China by reading the downward offshoring scenario, they assessed that same brand's credibility significantly lower than they had first done (*after*-brand credulity = 3.37). This result suggests that a luxury brand's downward offshoring lowers its perceived brand credibility among consumers, thereby supporting H5a.

Downward offshoring yields a similar influence on brand prestige. In testing H5b, the perceived brand prestige of *Signolilità* also significantly decreased after the participants read about the brand's offshoring practices in China (mean = 6.01 → 3.58, $F_{(1,54)} = 124.38, p = .00$), thus supporting H5b (see Table 20). The analysis reported a large effect size ($\eta^2 = .70$) and power (= 1.00), as did the brand credibility analysis. Although participants initially evaluated the perceived prestige of *Signolilità* as being very high (*before*-brand prestige = 6.01), they evaluated the same brand's prestige much lower than before, upon reading of its offshoring practices in China (*after*-brand prestige = 3.58). This result provides evidence that a luxury brand's downward offshoring practices can lower the perceived prestige of the brand, as H5b had hypothesized.

On the other hand, as Table 20 describes, no significant changes in brand credibility and brand prestige were found in the case of a luxury brand's upward offshoring. Regarding H6a, the perceived brand credibility of the Chinese luxury brand *Kuochuo* did not significantly increase after the participants read the scenario of the brand's offshoring in Italy, thereby refuting H6a ($F_{(1,56)} = .03, p = .87$) (see Table 20). A similar result was found for brand prestige. As Table 20 suggests, the perceived brand

Table 20

Study 3: Repeated Measure ANOVA Results Testing H5a-H6b

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>df, error df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Effect size</i>	<i>Power</i>	<i>Hypothesis Testing</i>
<i>Luxury Brand Downward Offshoring</i>								
Brand Credibility	Before: 5.43 After: 3.37	1.00 1.07	124.15	1, 54	.00*	.70	1.00	H5a Supported
Brand Prestige	Before: 6.01 After: 3.58	.98 1.48	124.38	1, 54	.00*	.70	1.00	H5b Supported
<i>Luxury Brand Upward Offshoring</i>								
Brand Credibility	Before: 5.18 After: 4.37	1.06 1.38	.03	1, 56	.87	.00	.05	H6a Not Supported
Brand Prestige	Before: 5.66 After: 5.05	1.16 1.25	.00	1, 56	.96	.00	.05	H6b Not Supported

* $\alpha < .05$, all values were rounded up to two decimal places.

prestige of *Kuochuo* did not significantly increase after the participants read the scenario of the brand's offshoring in Italy. Accordingly, H6b was not supported ($F_{(1,56)} = .00, p = .96$). In other words, refuting the assumptions of H6a and H6b about upward offshoring cases, the provision of information about the brand's offshoring in a high fashion image country (i.e., Italy) did not result in any significant changes relevant to the brand's perceived credibility and prestige among consumers.

Study 4: Mass Market Brands' Offshoring (H7-H8)

The effects of discrepancies between the COB and COM on brand credibility were also examined in the context of mass market brands in Study 4, by manipulating downward/upward offshoring scenarios of mass market brands. Specifically, H7-H8 were tested in Study 4. As Table 9 presents, 50 participants were informed of the downward scenario to test H7. The scenario described the offshoring practices of the Italian mass market brand *LaVestiti* in China. Similarly, another 50 participants were informed of the corresponding upward scenario to test H8. This upward scenario explained the offshoring practices of the Chinese mass market brand *Xiuxianfu* in Italy.

Table 21 provides the results from repeated measure ANOVA testing of H7-H8. There was no sphericity issue, based on the results of Mauchly's W tests (i.e., $W = 1.00$, p-values greater than .05). First, in the case of a mass market brand's downward offshoring, H7 was not supported because the perceived brand credibility of *LaVestiti* experienced a significant change (i.e., decrease) after the manipulation of the scenario, while H7 had hypothesized no such significant change. The participants' perceived brand

Table 21

Study 4: Repeated Measure ANOVA Results Testing H7-H8

	Mean	SD	F-value	df, error df	p-value	Effect size	Power	Hypothesis Testing
Mass Market Brand Downward Offshoring								
Brand Credibility	Before: 4.57 After: 3.32	1.15 1.53	28.02	1, 49	.00*	.36	1.00	H7 Not Supported
Mass Market Brand Upward Offshoring								
Brand Credibility	Before: 4.16 After: 4.20	1.37 1.18	.04	1, 49	.85	.00	.05	H8 Supported

* $\alpha < .05$, all values were rounded up to two decimal places.

credibility of *LaVestiti* significantly decreased after they read about the brand's offshoring practices in China, implying that awareness of downward offshoring also lowers brand credibility in the context of mass market brands (mean = 4.57 \rightarrow 3.32, $F_{(1,49)} = 28.02$, $p = .00$). The analysis yielded a medium effect size ($\eta^2 = .36$) and large power ($= 1.00$).

In the case of a mass market brand's upward offshoring, as presented in Table 21, H8 was supported because there appeared no significant change in the perceived brand credibility of *Xiuxianfu* after the participants read the scenario of the brand's offshoring practices in Italy ($F_{(1,49)} = .04$, $p = .85$). In other words, the awareness of *Xiuxianfu*'s production offshoring in Italy did not significantly increase/decrease the brand's credibility among consumers, as H8 had expected.

Study 1 & Study 3: Moderating Effect of Clothing Product Involvement (H9a-H9h)

In addition to the main effects of cross-border M&A/offshoring scenarios on brand credibility and prestige, the moderating effects of clothing product involvement were examined in Study 1 and Study 3 to test H9a-H9h. In order to test these moderating effects, clothing product involvement was entered as a covariate in the repeated measure ANOVA tests of Study 1 and Study 3. The interaction effect of clothing product involvement with the treatments (i.e., manipulation of the scenarios) on the dependent variables (i.e., brand credibility and brand prestige) was then assessed to determine the significance of the moderating effects.

Table 22 summarizes the interaction effect between clothing product involvement and the treatments (i.e., manipulation of the scenarios) for the four cases in Study 1 and Study 3 (i.e., luxury brands' downward/upward M&A/offshoring cases). Throughout the

analyses, no significant interaction effects were found, thereby refuting H9a-H9h. For example, in the case of a luxury brand's downward M&A in Study 1, the interaction effects were found not to be significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (scenario x CPI \rightarrow BC: $F_{(1,54)} = 3.83, p = .06$; scenario x CPI \rightarrow BP: $F_{(1,54)} = 3.53, p = .07$). This result was also found for the upward M&A case (scenario x CPI \rightarrow BC: $F_{(1,51)} = 1.86, p = .18$; scenario x CPI \rightarrow BP: $F_{(1,51)} = .06, p = .81$). In addition, in the case of a luxury brand's downward offshoring in Study 3, the interaction effects were also found not to be significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level (scenario x CPI \rightarrow BC: $F_{(1,54)} = .25, p = .62$; scenario x CPI \rightarrow BP: $F_{(1,54)} = .36, p = .55$). The upward offshoring case was also found to be not significant (scenario x CPI \rightarrow BC: $F_{(1,56)} = 1.18, p = .28$; scenario x CPI \rightarrow BP: $F_{(1,56)} = .65, p = .42$).

To visually inspect these moderating effects of clothing product involvement, interaction graphs between clothing product involvement and changes in brand credibility and brand prestige were generated. Figure 7 and Figure 8 present the interaction graphs for Study 1 and Study 3, respectively. In these visualizations, participants in each group were categorized into either the high clothing involvement group or the low involvement group to convert the variable from a continuous variable to a categorical variable, with the mean values of clothing product involvement (CPI) in each group being used as the cutoff values. As Figure 7 and Figure 8 describe, the two lines of high and low involvement groups were likely to parallel the changes of brand credibility and prestige. This indicates no significant interaction effects between the participants' clothing product involvement and their changes in brand credibility and prestige, refuting H9a-H9h.

Table 22

Study 1 & Study 3: Interaction Effects of Clothing Product Involvement Testing H9a-H9h

		<i>F-value</i>	<i>df, error df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Effect size</i>	<i>Power</i>	<i>Hypothesis Testing</i>
<i>Study 1</i>	<i>Luxury Brand Downward M&A</i>						
	Scenario*CPI → BC	3.83	1, 54	.06	.07	.49	H9a Not Supported
	Scenario*CPI → BP	3.53	1, 54	.07	.06	.45	H9b Not Supported
	<i>Luxury Brand Upward M&A</i>						
	Scenario*CPI → BC	1.86	1, 51	.18	.04	.27	H9c Not Supported
	Scenario*CPI → BP	.06	1, 51	.81	.00	.06	H9d Not Supported
<i>Study 3</i>	<i>Luxury Brand Downward Offshoring</i>						
	Scenario*CPI → BC	.25	1, 54	.62	.01	.08	H9e Not Supported
	Scenario*CPI → BP	.36	1, 54	.55	.01	.09	H9f Not Supported
	<i>Luxury Brand Upward Offshoring</i>						
	Scenario*CPI → BC	1.18	1, 56	.28	.02	.19	H9g Not Supported
	Scenario*CPI → BP	.65	1, 56	.42	.01	.12	H9h Not Supported

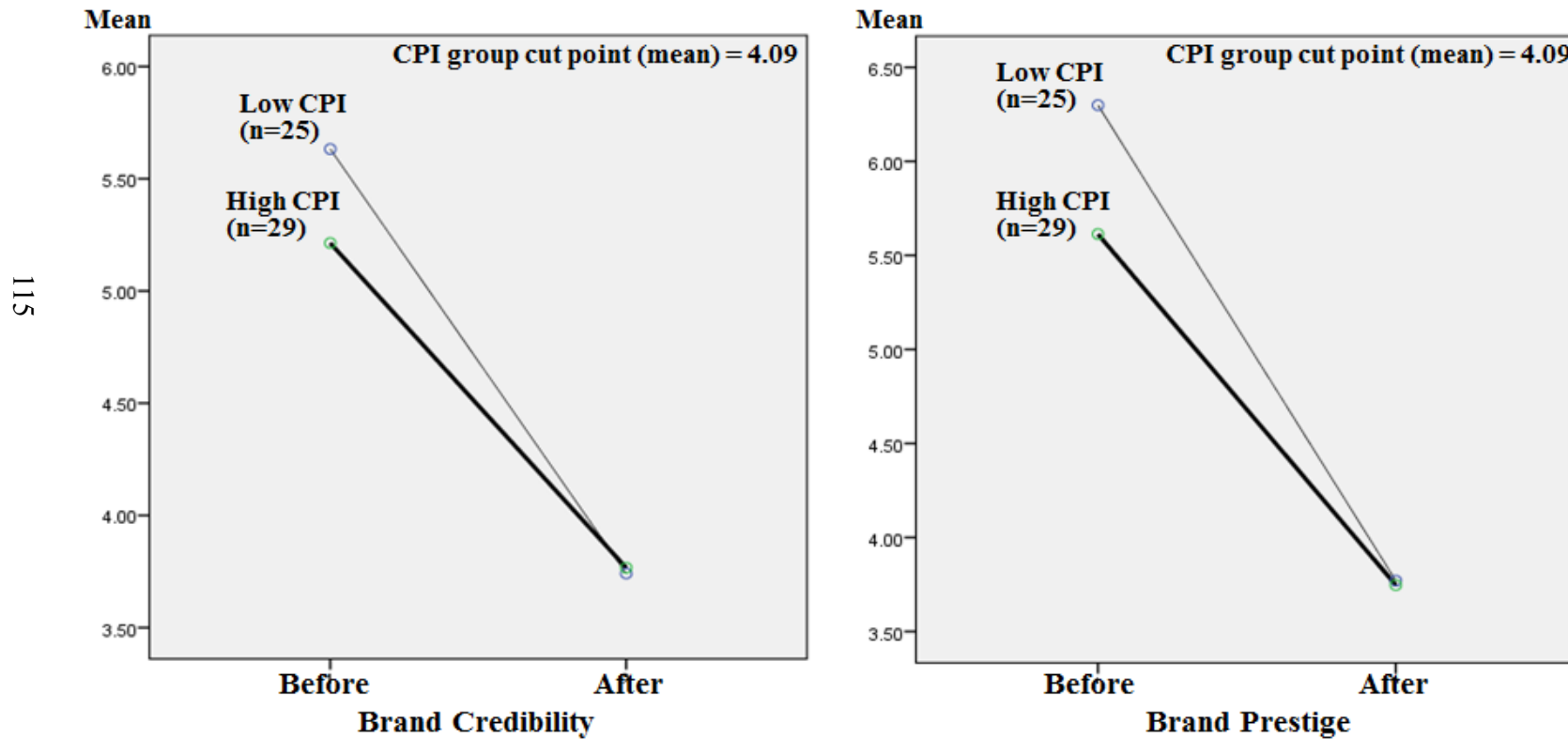
Note. CPI = Clothing product involvement, BC = Brand credibility, BP = Brand prestige.

* $\alpha < .05$, all values were rounded up to two decimal places.

Figure 7

Results of Testing Clothing Product Involvement Interaction Effects in Study 1

Luxury Downward M & A

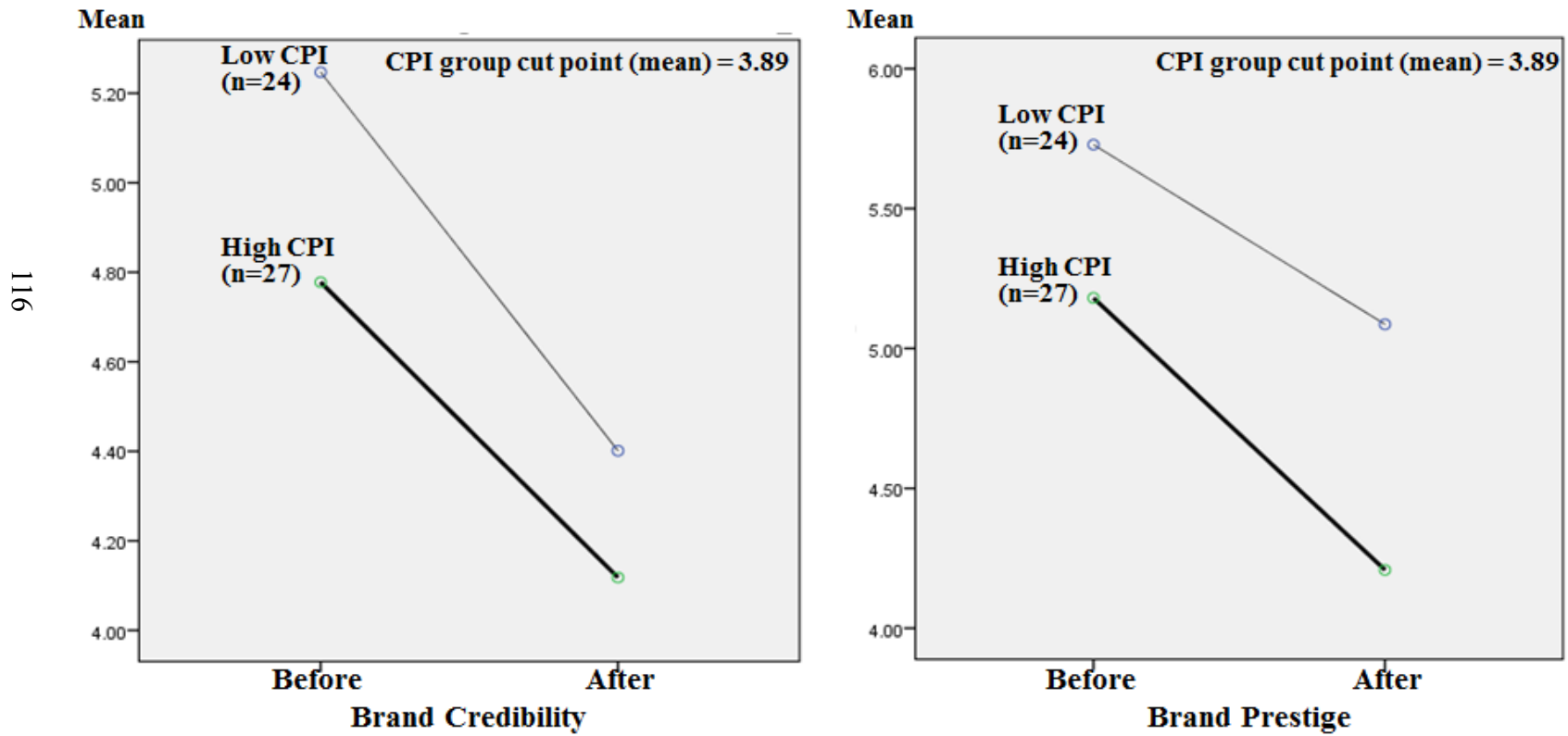


*CPI = Clothing product involvement.

Figure 7

Results of Testing Clothing Product Involvement Interaction Effects in Study 1 (Cont'd)

Luxury Upward M & A

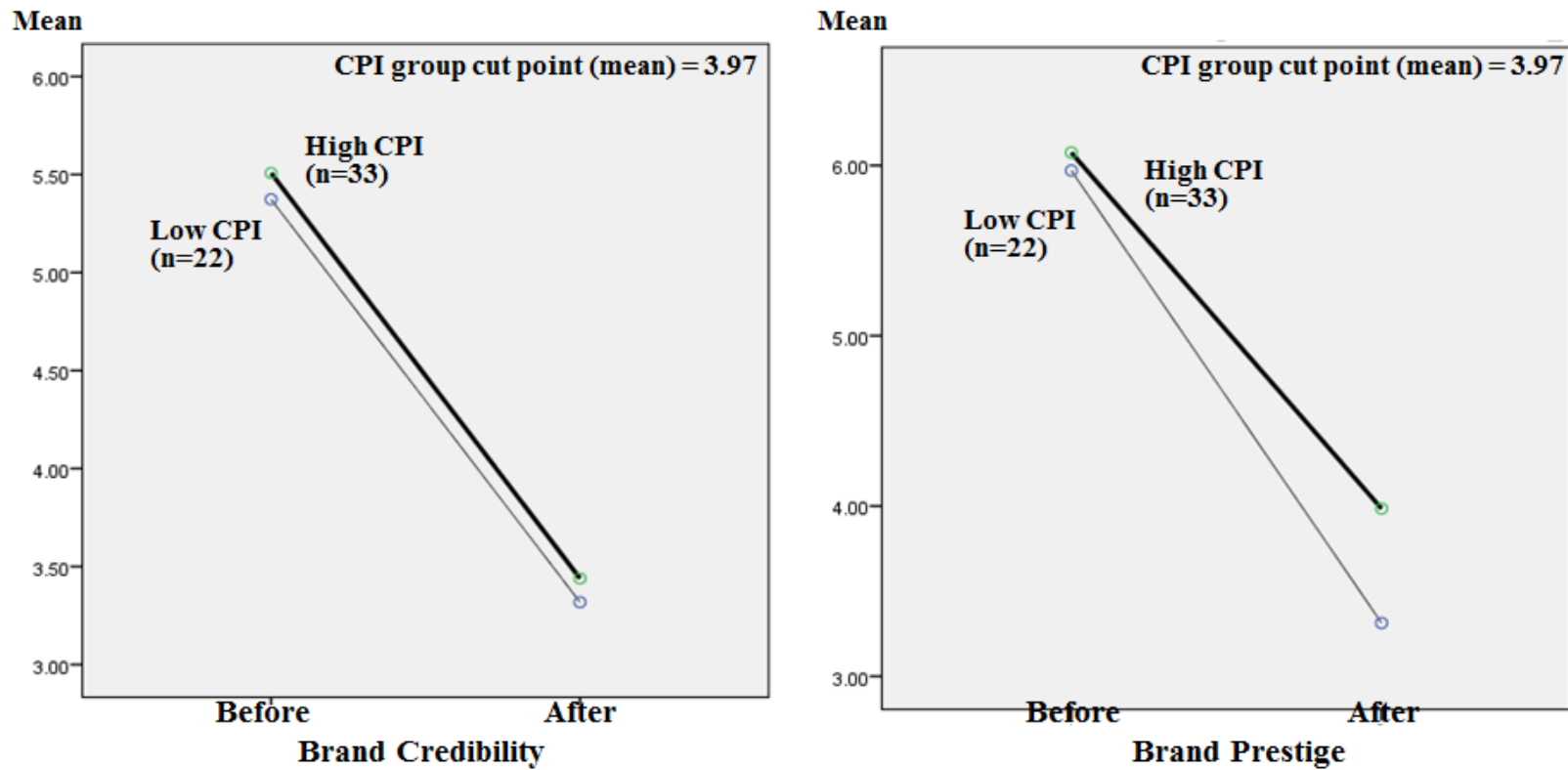


*CPI = Clothing product involvement.

Figure 8

Results of Testing Clothing Product Involvement Interaction Effects in Study 3

Luxury Downward Offshoring

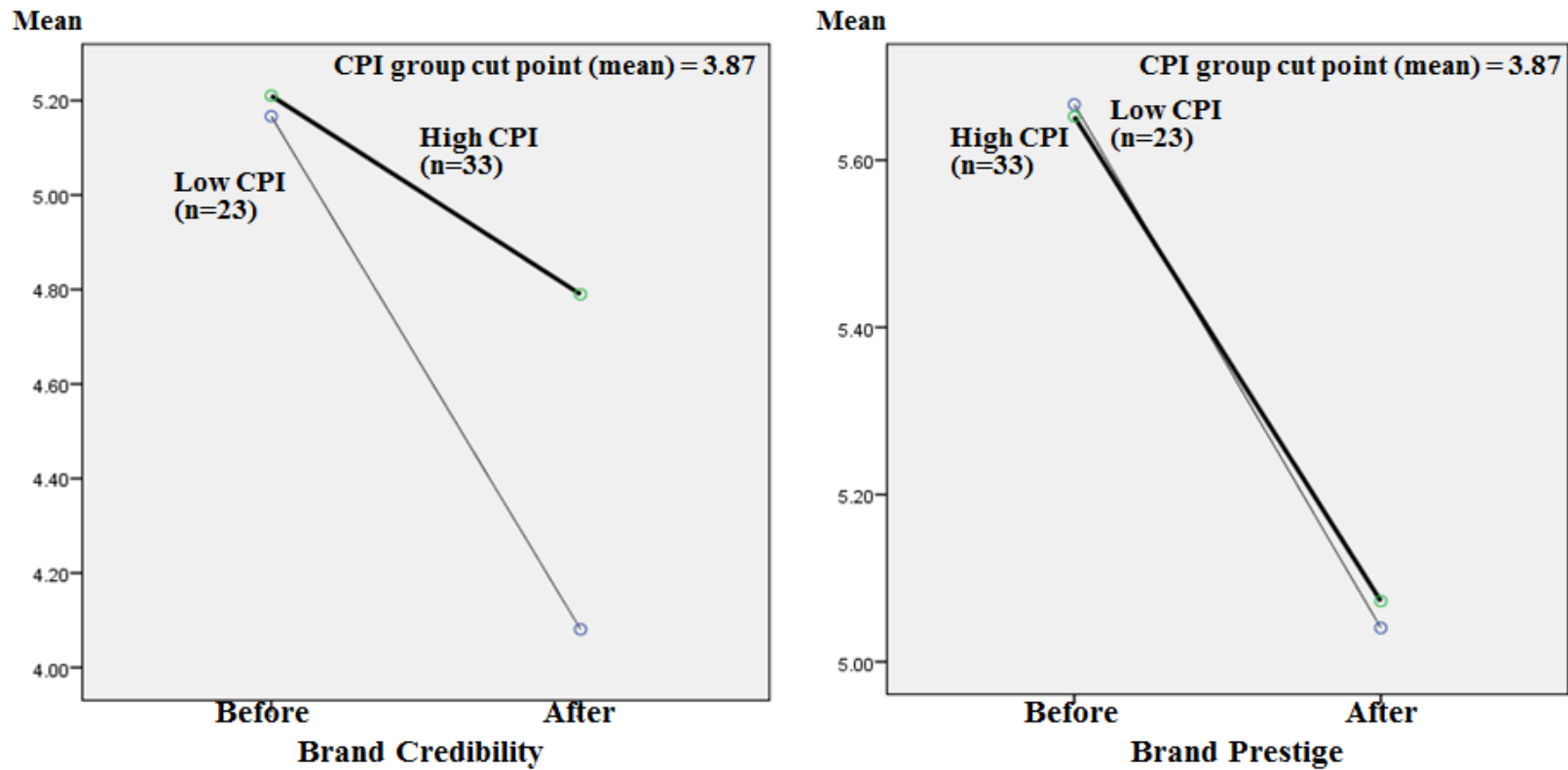


*CPI = Clothing product involvement.

Figure 8

Results of Testing Clothing Product Involvement Interaction Effects in Study 3 (Cont'd)

Luxury Upward Offshoring



*CPI = Clothing product involvement.

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

To conclude the results of hypotheses testing, six out of the twenty developed hypotheses (H1a, H1b, H4, H5a, H5b, and H8) were supported. Table 23 provides a summary of these findings. Overall, the luxury brands' downward shifts in COC or COM, through downward cross-border M&A or offshoring, significantly decreased the brands' credibility and prestige (i.e., H1a-H1b and H5a-H5b supported). In contrast to our assumptions, the findings revealed that these downward shifts of COC or COM also significantly decreased the mass market brands' brand credibility and prestige (i.e., H3 and H7 not supported). However, upward shifts of country image through cross-border M&A or offshoring neither significantly changed nor increased the brand credibility and prestige of luxury brands (i.e., H2a-H2b and H6a-H6b not supported) or mass market brands (i.e., H4 and H8 supported). Lastly, no moderating effects of clothing product involvement were found throughout the luxury brands' downward/upward M&A/offshoring cases, thereby refuting H9a-H9h.

Table 23

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Context	Study	Group	Hypothesis	Our Result	H Supported?
Cross-Border M&A Effect: COB vs. COC	Study 1	Luxury Brand Downward M&A	H1a: Downward COC \rightarrow BC \downarrow	Decreased	Supported
			H1b: Downward COC \rightarrow BP \downarrow	Decreased	Supported
			H9a: Downward COC x CPI \rightarrow BC \downarrow	No interaction	Not Supported
			H9b: Downward COC x CPI \rightarrow BC \downarrow	No interaction	Not Supported
		Luxury Brand Upward M&A	H2a: Upward COC \rightarrow BC \uparrow	No change	Not Supported
			H2b: Upward COC \rightarrow BP \uparrow	No change	Not Supported
			H9c: Upward COC x CPI \rightarrow BC \uparrow	No interaction	Not Supported
			H9d: Upward COC x CPI \rightarrow BC \uparrow	No interaction	Not Supported
	Study 2	Mass Market Brand Downward M&A	H3: Downward COC \rightarrow BC no change	Decreased	Not Supported
		Mass Market Brand Upward M&A	H4: Upward COC \rightarrow BC no change	No change	Supported
Offshoring Effect: COB vs. COM	Study 3	Luxury Brand Downward Offshoring	H5a: Downward COM \rightarrow BC \downarrow	Decreased	Supported
			H5b: Downward COM \rightarrow BP \downarrow	Decreased	Supported
			H9e: Downward COM x CPI \rightarrow BC \downarrow	No interaction	Not Supported
			H9f: Downward COM x CPI \rightarrow BC \downarrow	No interaction	Not Supported
		Luxury Brand Upward Offshoring	H6a: Upward COM \rightarrow BC \uparrow	No change	Not Supported
			H6b: Upward COM \rightarrow BP \uparrow	No change	Not Supported
			H9g: Upward COM x CPI \rightarrow BC \uparrow	No interaction	Not Supported
			H9h: Upward COM x CPI \rightarrow BC \uparrow	No interaction	Not Supported
	Study 4	Mass Market Brand Downward Offshoring	H7: Downward COM \rightarrow BC no change	Decreased	Not Supported
		Mass Market Brand Upward Offshoring	H8: Upward COM \rightarrow BC no change	No change	Supported

Note. Bolded parts indicate supported/significant results.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter explains the conclusions derived from the research. First, a summary of findings is provided, along with their conclusion statements. Next, findings from each of the four studies (Study 1 – Study 4) are discussed in more detail, in relation to existing theories and findings from previous studies. Subsequently, implications are discussed in both theoretical and managerial perspectives. The study's limitations are also explained, with suggestions for future studies.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of discrepancies in image among the multiple countries associated with a fashion brand on the brand's perceived credibility and prestige among consumers. In particular, it focused on the discrepancies between COB and COC manipulated by cross-border M&A scenarios, as well as the discrepancies between COB and COM manipulated by a brand's offshoring practices. Both downward and upward shifts between the COC and COM due to cross-border M&A or offshoring scenarios were examined at two different brand tiers—luxury brands and mass market brands. In addition, consumers' clothing product involvement was examined as a moderating variable on the effect of country discrepancies on brand credibility and prestige. Based on cognitive dissonance theory, social exchange theory, and other literature relevant to the topic, a total of 20 hypotheses (H1a-H9h) were developed.

In order to test these hypotheses, four experiments (Study 1 – Study 4) were designed (see Figure 5). A total of 426 usable responses were collected from college students aged 18 and above via Qualtrics online surveys. Among the 426 participants, about 50 participants were randomly assigned to each one of the eight cells in the four studies (see Table 9). Each of the eight cells constituted difference scenarios of luxury/mass market brands' downward/upward M&A/offshoring cases (see Table 5). To test the hypotheses, the participants' perceived brand credibility and prestige were measured *before* and *after* the manipulation of the scenario using a within-subject design, and the changes associated with their perceived brand credibility and prestige were assessed through repeated measure Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

The results of the repeated measure ANOVA revealed that six of the twenty hypotheses were supported (see Table 23). Study 1 found that the participants' perceived brand credibility (H1a) and prestige (H1b) significantly decreased after they read about the brand's downward M&A scenario, thus supporting H1a and H1b. However, an upward M&A scenario did not increase the brand's credibility (H2a) or its prestige (H2b), refuting H2a and H2b. Individual participant's clothing product involvement did not yield a significant moderating effect on changes in brand credibility and prestige, for no interaction effect was found (H9a-H9d not supported). In Study 2, the mass market brand's upward M&A scenario did not significantly increase the brand's credibility or its prestige, thereby supporting H4. However, contrary to our expectation in H3, the mass market brand's downward M&A scenario significantly decreased the perceived brand credibility among participants, as in the case of the luxury brand's downward M&A.

The results of Study 3 revealed that a brand's perceived credibility (H5a) and prestige (H5b) significantly decreases after one becomes aware of a downward offshoring scenario, supporting H5a-H5b. However, an upward offshoring scenario did not have any significant effect of increasing brand credibility (H6a) or prestige (H6b), which provided evidence to refute H6a and H6b. Clothing product involvement did not play any significant role as moderator in the downward/upward offshoring cases (H9e-H9h not supported). In Study 4, the upward offshoring scenario did not significantly alter the mass market brand's perceived credibility, thus supporting H8. However, refuting H7, the downward offshoring scenario significantly decreased the perceived brand credibility of the mass market brand, just as it did in the luxury brand context.

Collectively, although some hypotheses were not supported by the findings of Study 1 – Study 3, the experiments revealed consistent patterns in consumer reaction toward discrepancies in country image information. These trends can be summarized into three conclusion statements: first, a **downward shift of COC/COM** through cross-border M&A or offshoring **decreases** the brand credibility and prestige of both luxury brands and mass market brands (Study 1 – Study 4). However, an **upward shift of COC/COM** through cross-border M&A or offshoring **does not increase** the brand credibility or prestige of both luxury brand and mass market brand (Study 1 – Study 4). Finally, these patterns in the results are consistent among consumers regardless of individual clothing product involvement levels (Study 1 & 3). These patterns are discussed further in the next section.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, the specific findings from each of the four studies (Study 1 – Study 4) are discussed in more detail, particularly in relation/comparison to existing theories and findings from previous studies. This is followed by a discussion of the findings from testing the moderating effects of clothing product involvement, along with a summary of all components of the discussion.

Discussion of Study 1

Study 1 found evidence to argue that the downward cross-border M&A of a luxury brand can decrease the brand's credibility and prestige in the minds of consumers. Regarding the Italian luxury brand *Signolilità*, the participants' perception of its credibility and prestige *changed* after their exposure to the discrepant COB and COC information. This result coincides with cognitive dissonance theory, which posits that consumers are likely to modify their attitudes toward a brand when they are exposed to contradictory information about it (Festinger, 1957). Compared to the *before*-measure, in which the participants were only given the COB information “*Signolilità – Italian Luxury*” via an image stimulus, their attitudes toward the brand's credibility and prestige were modified after they received the information disclosing the incongruent COB and COC resulting from the brand's cross-border M&A, just as cognitive dissonance theory suggests. More specifically, because it was a downward situation in which new information about the COC as a low fashion image country (i.e., China) disrupted the high fashion image COB (i.e., Italy), the shift in attitude occurred in the negative direction, as manifested by the decrease in brand credibility and prestige evaluation.

This result is also consistent with the findings of previous researchers, who claimed that the interference of inconsistent information about the brand could decrease perceived brand credibility among consumers. For instance, Baek et al. (2010) and Erdem et al. (2002) explained that brand credibility is determined by consistency in brand-related information, which in turn implies that recognized incongruence in brand attributes can decrease brand credibility. In addition, the results of Study 1 also support previous studies that examined similar topics, such as fashion brands' cross-border M&A effects. In the previous study of Chung et al. (2014), for example, researchers found that a Chinese company's cross-border acquisition of the Italian retail brand, Tod's, decreased the brand's perceived value (e.g., perceived price, perceived product quality, etc.) among consumers. In our study, the downward shift of the COC through cross-border M&A also decreased the luxury brand's credibility and prestige. Therefore, the findings from Study 1 were generally consistent with existing theories and findings from other researchers.

However, the case of a luxury brand's upward cross-border M&A revealed results different from those predicted in H2a-H2b. Based on Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, the provision of discrepant COB and COC scenarios was expected to drive consumers to modify their attitudes toward the brand. Specifically, in the upward M&A case, their perceived brand credibility and prestige was expected to increase because the COC had been shifted from a low fashion image country (i.e., China) to a high fashion image country (i.e., Italy). However, the results revealed that the participants' evaluations of *Kuochuo*'s brand credibility and prestige did not improve after reading about its ownership change to an Italian company. This result suggests that

in upward M&A cases, the COB seems to play a stronger role in shaping consumers' perceived brand credibility and prestige. Therefore, the information about the shift in COC to a high fashion image country may not change the original COB image that had been associated a low fashion image country. In fact, the information about such an ownership change slightly decreased brand credibility and prestige, though the change was not as statistically significant as was the downward M&A case (i.e., mean of brand credibility = 5.18 \rightarrow 4.37, mean of brand prestige = 5.66 \rightarrow 5.05).

This finding proves interesting not only because it is inconsistent with the assumptions of existing theories (e.g., cognitive dissonance theory), but also because it suggests a new perspective on the effects of cross-border M&A. Rather than an upward shift in COC improving consumers' perceptions toward a brand, the participants in this study might have thought that the upgrade of COC would not necessarily lead to better management, better product quality, or better services. Moreover, consumers might simply be reluctant to unexpected changes in corporate ownership, as indicated by how their evaluations of the brand slightly decreased in the cases of upward movement, just as it did in the downward cases.

The results of Study 1 might also be interpreted in terms of consumers being more sensitive to the negative, descending changes of COC than they are to the positive, improving changes, since the downward M&A significantly decreased brand evaluations while the upward M&A exhibited no such significant effect. Among existing consumer behavior theories, Gray's (1987) *Approach and Avoidance Theory* may provide a plausible explanation. The theory posits that consumers possess two different

motivational systems underlying their behaviors: the behavioral inhibition system (BIS) and the behavioral activation system (BAS) (Gray, 1987). The BIS is activated when consumers are exposed to a negative stimulus by motivating them to avoid negative outcomes, such as risk and punishment (Carver & White, 1994; Gray, 1987). The BAS is activated when consumers encounter a positive stimulus that motivates them to approach positive outcomes, such as pleasure and rewards (Carver & White, 1994; Gray, 1987). Researchers have explained that these two different facets of the motivation system often guide human behaviors and that one can be activated more frequently than the other in certain situations (Arnold & Reynolds, 2012; Carver & White 1994; Gray, 1987). By applying the approach and avoidance theory, one could argue that respondents in this study were more likely to be motivated by the BIS than by the BAS, thereby making them more attentive to avoiding negative outcomes arise from downward M&A than they were to approaching the potential positive changes resulting from an upward M&A.

Another explanation for the consumers' higher sensitivity to downward M&A than to upward M&A is the *Prospect Theory*, which was developed by the behavioral economists Kahneman and Tversky (1979). The prospect theory explains that people make decisions by evaluating potential gains and losses relative to a particular reference point and tend to be more sensitive to potential losses than to probable gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). The theory has been applied to various human behaviors, providing explanations for why many people might purchase insurance to prevent potential accidents but fewer participate in gambling to earn extra profit, as well as why consumers are more sensitive to product safety risks in product choice than to extra incentives such

as reward cards (Holt & Laury, 2002). The prospect theory can also provide explanations for consumer behaviors regarding downward/upward M&A by arguing that they were more conscious about avoiding potential risks from the downward M&A than they were about expecting potential incentives that an upward M&A might bring. Some findings from Study 2 also support this interpretation.

Discussion of Study 2

Study 2 examined the effects of a mass market brand's cross-border M&A on its brand credibility. For the upward M&A case, as expected in H4, the Chinese mass market brand's perceived brand credibility was not significantly changed by the manipulation of the scenario. In other words, although conflicting information about the COC (i.e., Italy) was added to the information about the COB (i.e., China), the participants' attitudes toward the Chinese mass market brand *Xiuxianfu* remained unchanged, thus diverging from the assumptions of cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). This finding appears to support the notions of Homans's (1958) social exchange theory and other previous researchers (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2004; Forney et al., 1993; Heisey, 1990; Jung et al., 2014), in that consumers tend to put emphasis on origin country cues more for luxury brand choices than for lower brand tiers.

However, the downward M&A's effect on mass market brands, which was also examined in Study 2, revealed a conflicting result; refuting H3, the manipulation of a downward M&A scenario (i.e., acquisition of Italian mass market brand by a Chinese company) significantly decreased the brand credibility of the Italian mass market brand *LaVestiti*. This result challenges the original assumption of H3 that had been based on

Homans's (1958) social exchange theory because, hearkening to the results of Study 1, the downward M&A significantly decreased the luxury brand's credibility and prestige, with the same result also being found in Study 2. In other words, the downward cross-border M&A yielded similar effects on both luxury brands (Study 1) and mass market brands (Study 2), thereby decreasing brand credibility in the two contexts. This parallel trend collectively contradicts social exchange theory, which assumes that consumers assign different emphases regarding discrepancies in country image by brand tier (Homans, 1958).

Along this vein, the aforementioned support for H4 can also be discussed from a different perspective. Although the hypothesis was supported, the results of Study might imply that social exchange theory cannot be completely supported. Because Study 1 suggested that a luxury brand's credibility is not significantly affected by an upward M&A either, the effect of upward cross-border M&A might not be different by brand tier (by the amount of consumer input invested into the exchange). Therefore, as the downward effect was found to be the same across brand tiers, this can also serve as a refutation to social exchange theory, which assumes different effects among brand tiers.

In short, by connecting the results of Study 2 to those of Study 1, a similar pattern is observed across brand tiers: consumers tend to be highly sensitive about the downgrading change of the COC (i.e., downward M&A case) with both luxury brands and mass market brands, but not highly affected by information about upgrading shifts in the COC (i.e., upward M&As) regardless of brand tier. As discussed earlier in Study 1, this may imply that consumer reactions to discrepancies between the COB and COC are

determined more by whether the incoming change is positive or negative (i.e., downward or upward) than by the tier to which a brand belongs. Although H4 was supported, when combining the results the overall trends suggest that social exchange theory might be inadequate in explaining the effects of discrepancies in country image across brand tiers.

Discussion of Study 3

Study 3 examined the effects of discrepancies between COB and COM on luxury brands by manipulating offshoring scenarios and revealed findings similar to Study 1. First, the result of examining downward offshoring effects was consistent with existing theories and previous researchers' findings. After consumers were informed that the products of the Italian luxury brand (i.e., *Signolilità*) are actually produced in China through offshoring, their evaluation of the brand's credibility and prestige significantly decreased, compared to when they were only informed that the COB was Italy. This finding supports cognitive dissonance theory in that the juxtaposition of incongruent information (i.e., COB and COM) may drive consumers' modification of attitudes toward a brand by decreasing its credibility and prestige in their eyes. The result is also consistent with previous researchers who found that awareness of a brand's association with a low fashion image country (e.g., China) decreases consumers' evaluation of the brand (e.g., Ha-Brookshire, 2012; Lee et al., 2013; Phau & Leng, 2008). In particular, our result coincides with the findings of Ha-Brookshire (2012), who examined whether a low fashion image country (i.e., China) as the COM decreases consumers' perceived brand price and preference.

Nonetheless, similar to the findings of Study 1 and Study 2, the manipulation of an upward offshoring scenario could not improve the perceived credibility and prestige of the luxury brand. After reading the scenario explaining that *Kuochuo*'s products are actually being produced in Italy through upward offshoring, the participants' evaluation of *Kuochuo*'s brand credibility and prestige did not significantly enhance, but instead slightly decreased, though not to a statistically significant extent (mean of brand credibility = 5.18 \rightarrow 4.37, mean of brand prestige = 5.66 \rightarrow 5.05). Again, this implies that consumers might be generally reluctant to conflicts in country image and that the fact that products are being outsourced from a high fashion image country cannot alone lead to increased brand credibility and prestige. For the participants of Study 3, although the brand moved production to a foreign country with a higher fashion image (i.e., Italy), such offshoring strategies by themselves could not convince consumers that a brand with roots in a low fashion image country (i.e., China) had become more credible and prestigious.

Discussion of Study 4

Study 4, pertaining to the effects of offshoring on mass market brands, revealed patterns similar to those found in the other experiments. Consistent with H8's prediction based on social exchange theory (Homans, 1958), the upward offshoring scenario did not change the perceived brand credibility of the Chinese mass market brand *Xiuxianfu*. The fact that the brand manufactures its products in a high fashion image country (i.e., Italy) could not significantly improve the Chinese mass market brand's credibility. This result appears consistent with previous researchers' arguments, which have posited that brand

cues related to origin countries do not always significantly affect consumers' perceptions of a brand, particularly with mass market brands with low involvement (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2004; Heisey, 1990; Jung et al., 2014).

However, refuting H7, which expected no significant downward offshoring effect on the credibility of mass market brands, a downward shift of the COM significantly lowered the perceived credibility of the mass market brand. As with Study 2, which found a significant decrease in the mass market brand's credibility due to the downward shift of the COC, this result does not support the original assumptions based on Homans's (1958) social exchange theory, since the downward shift of the COM decreased the perceived credibility of both luxury and mass market brands, rather than yielding different results across brand tiers. Instead, the result strengthens the common patterns found across Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3: that significant impacts were found in downgrading shifts and little impacts were made by upgrading shifts in country images across brand tiers.

Discussion of the Moderator

Testing the moderating role of clothing product involvement found no evidence to argue for its significant role. As Table 22 presented earlier, throughout the downward/upward M&A/offshoring cases of luxury brands, clothing product involvement did not significantly strengthen or weaken the effects of discrepant country images on brand credibility and prestige. This implies that the degree of the individual participant's interest in, involvement in, and values assigned to clothes do not affect how much they pay attention to the discrepancies between COB, COC or COM, particularly, as powerfully as to change their attitudes toward the brand's credibility and prestige.

This result does not support the findings of previous researchers. Many have posited that consumers' clothing product involvement levels affect and determine their attitudes and behaviors regarding clothes and clothes-related stimuli (e.g., Kim, 2005; Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006; O'Cass, 2004; O'Cass & Choy, 2008). Based on such logic, H9a-H9h hypothesized that consumers' clothing product involvement would affect the degree of attitude change toward discrepant country image information, just as it did for similar consumer behaviors regarding clothes (e.g., Kim, 2005; O'Cass, 2004). However, the influence of clothing product involvement was found not to apply to this particular context; that is, to consumers' sensitivity toward country image discrepancies in fashion brands. This finding is meaningful in that clothing brands' country image issues prove to be an exceptional subject, wherein a consumer's individual clothing involvement does not determine his or her attitudinal tendencies. Differing from other subjects related to clothes, country image issues might be related to other consumer characteristics that are more directly related to the country image subject, such as consumers' views about foreign countries, patriotism, internationalism, etc. (Balabanis, Diamantopoulos, Mueller, & Melewar, 2001; Cleveland, Laroche, & Papadopoulos, 2009), rather than clothing product involvement. Further, as compared to clothing product involvement that indicates an individual's overall interest in clothes, his/her involvement in a particular brand, or, the extent how much he/she puts importance on country image-related product attributes compared to the other attributes (e.g., price, design, quality, etc.), might be more closely related to his/her sensitivity toward the dissonant country image of the brand.

In fact, among the four cases in which the moderating effect of clothing product involvement was tested, the results in the two upward cases (i.e., upward M&A and upward offshoring) were found not to be significant. This was not too surprising, since the main effects of discrepancies in country image with regard to brand credibility and prestige were not significant (i.e., H2a-H2b, H6a-H6b not supported). Since the main relationship between the treatment (i.e., scenarios) and the dependent variables (i.e., brand credibility and brand prestige) was already statistically not significant, the moderating effects built upon the main relationship between these two might not be found automatically. However, for the other two cases that revealed significant effects from discrepancies in country image (i.e., downward M&A and downward offshoring), further investigation will be necessary because potential moderators other than clothing product involvement that significantly affect consumers' reactions might exist.

Summary of Discussion

Collectively, the findings from all four studies (Study 1 – Study 4) suggest the following interpretations: first, a downward shift in the COC or COM caused negative reactions among consumers; thus, their perceived brand credibility and prestige were decreased. In other words, the interference of a COC as a low fashion image country played a greater role than the original COB as a high fashion image country. By contrast, an upward shift of COC or COM could not change the brand image rooted in the original COB country, for both luxury brands and mass market brands. In this case, the original COB as a low fashion image country played a more significant role than the interfering new COM as a high fashion image country. These findings suggest that consumers are

likely to be more reactive/sensitive to downward changes in country image information than to upward changes, regardless of brand tier. Finally, individual consumers' involvement levels with clothes did not significantly affect their reactions toward the discrepant country information. This suggests that the discovered effects of discrepancies in country image are applied identically to consumers, with no significant moderating role of their differing clothing product involvement levels. This result also suggests that other potential variables, which influence consumers' sensitivity to country image shifts more than their overall interest in clothes, might exist.

Implications

The findings of this study provide meaningful theoretical and managerial implications. The theoretical implications are explained in terms of how the findings of this study provide empirical evidence to the existing theories and overcome gaps in the extant literature, thereby making contribution to the theories. In addition, the managerial implications of the study are also discussed by explaining what the findings suggest for branding and marketing practitioners.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to existing theories and literature in five ways. First, it examined how the discrepancies between multiple layers of country images in a single fashion brand affect the brand, thereby extending our knowledge of the country image effect, particularly in fashion studies. Reflecting the current market trends of complexity regarding country image and focusing especially on the two major trends of cross-border M&A and offshoring practices of fashion brands, this study decomposed country image

into COB, COC, and COM—an approach that had not been sufficiently attempted in fashion studies. With this, the study examined how discrepancies in the images of these countries affect consumers' brand perceptions, as well as which of the multiple country images plays a more significant role than the others by changing brand credibility and prestige in different scenarios of downward/upward M&A and offshoring cases. In this way, the findings of this study advance our knowledge of the influences that multiple country images might have on consumers' brand perceptions.

Second, in studying the effects of discrepancies in country image, this study applied a multi-theoretical approach that had been limitedly attempted by the extant literature. In explaining the potential impact of multiple country images on consumers' brand perceptions at two levels of brand tiers, this study utilized cognitive dissonance theory and social exchange theory. Showing how these two theories can or cannot explain the underlying mechanisms of consumer behavior – that is, “why” consumers modify their attitudes and may exhibit different approaches to luxury and mass market brand tiers – this study provides theoretical explanations for consumer reactions to specific phenomena, such as the multiple country images effect, which can be further adapted for future studies. The findings of this study showed that consumer reactions to multiple country image stimuli are explained by cognitive dissonance theory; however, those reactions do not differ across brand tiers, thus failing to provide support to social exchange theory.

Third, by examining both downward and upward cases, the findings of this study contribute knowledge that shifts in the COC or COM result in different outcomes between downward and upward situations that were yet known in the extant literature. Previous research stemmed primarily from a developed country's perspective; thus, the focus of research centered predominantly on examining how developed countries could promote their well-built country images in marketing products, and whether their downward movements in offshoring damage their product images (e.g., Chung et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2011; Lee et al., 2011). However, this study considered upward cross-border M&A and offshoring cases that occur in today's market (see Table 1), wherein a brand from a low fashion image country is the principal role. Although the result found that upward strategies can hardly improve brand images, this comprehensive approach, combining/comparing both downward and upward cases, contributes to the literature by adding the knowledge that the effects of discrepancies in country images can differ between downward and upward cases.

Fourth, in examining the effects of having multiple country images for a brand, this study tested both luxury and mass market brand tiers, an approach that had only inadequately attempted in previous studies. Because consumers tend to have substantially different expectations and perceptions toward luxury brands and mass market brands (Homans, 1958), it is worthwhile to understand whether the effect of discrepancies in country image plays the same or different role by brand tier. The findings of this study revealed empirical evidence arguing that the effect of discrepancies in country image does not differ across brand tiers.

Lastly, by focusing on brand credibility and prestige as dependent variables, the findings of this study discuss how the discrepancies in country image impact brand-level outcomes, such as brand credibility and prestige, to the literature of complex country image effects. Although there exists information about product-level outcomes in the literature with regard to product images, product qualities, and perceived product values (e.g., Chao, 1993; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Ha-Brookshire, 2012), limited information is available that discusses how brand-level outcomes might be applied across product categories, toward the overall business of the brands. In particular, for highly brand-dominant industries such as the fashion industry, information about brand-level outcomes for multiple country images that was found by this study is critical. The importance of these brand-level implications will be discussed further in the managerial implications that follow.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this study also suggest managerial implications that deserve consideration. First, one of the significant findings of this study argues that downward shifts in the COC or COM, resulting from cross-border M&A or offshoring practices, can damage the brand credibility of both luxury and mass market brands, as well as the prestige of luxury brands. In the experiments, once the brands that originated from a high fashion image country (i.e., Italy) attained another layer of country image from a low fashion image country (i.e., China) due to M&A/offshoring, their brand credibility and prestige significantly dropped.

This strengthens the importance of post-M&A/offshoring country image management for brands. Because the movement of corporate ownership, or the actual place where the products are made, to a foreign country can alter consumers' brand evaluations in a negative direction, the brands that are under cross-border M&A contracts or that heavily utilize offshoring strategies will need to develop effective communication strategies for consumers that can minimize the negative effects of such practices. For example, because the downward shift of the ownership of *Signolilità* and *LaVestiti* (i.e., Italian brands used in the experiments) to China lowered both brands' credibility and prestige, these companies may consider adopting marketing communications that highly emphasize their Italian tradition (i.e., COB) while veiling the new COC. In addition, marketing messages that promise to keep the original brand heritage, tradition, or product quality control systems after the cross-border M&A can be helpful as part of a post-M&A communication program. For instance, after being merged with a Chinese investment group, Volvo increased the exclusivity in its dealership network and strengthened its high-tech facilities by inviting European manufacturers to protect the brand's premium European image (Leung & Yang, 2015).

Another noticeable portion of the findings emphasizes how upward shifts in the COC or COM could not change the brand credibility or prestige rooted in the original COB's image. Even though the Chinese brands *Kuochuo* and *Xiuxianfu* aimed to upgrade their brand images by merging with Italian investors or by outsourcing their products from Italy, these upward strategies could not significantly improve their brand credibility or prestige among consumers. This shows that once the original brand image based on

COB is built, it plays a robust role on brand image that cannot be changed simply by moving the COC or COM to a high fashion image country. Therefore, for such cases, managers will need to explore effective ways to improve brand images other than associating with or outsourcing products from a high fashion image country. For example, some additional marketing programs that relate more directly to improving product/services may be helpful, such as: promoting premium quality/fabrics and unique designs and providing extra services and rewards programs may be helpful in overcoming consumers' inferior first impressions toward the brand based on its origin from a low fashion image country. While this suggestion is based on the findings of this study, it should be also noted that a country's image may also improve naturally by time. That is, the image of the brand from a low fashion image country may be improved as the home country's industrial economy and brand management capability develop over the years, which may also improve brand prestige and credibility. For instance, a brand from an emerging country may become popular in the global market thereby improving the overall image toward the country.

Third, the fact that no significant effect from clothing product involvement was found indicates that brands do not necessarily need to invest in segmenting consumers by their involvement with clothes when managing the effect of country image shifts. The patterns in consumer reaction to downward/upward shifts were consistent with no significant moderating role of their individual involvement with clothes.

Finally, combining these results, the findings from downward/upward cases of luxury and mass market brands collectively revealed that consumers react to the downward information more sensitively than to the upward information. They do this by decreasing their evaluations of brand credibility and prestige, regardless of brand tier. These findings suggest that consumers might be more affected by changes that could negatively affect their choice of brand, rather than by changes that might add benefits to their brand choice. As explained earlier in the discussion, some consumer behavior theories, such as *approach and avoidance theory* and *the prospect theory*, explain such consumer tendencies (Arnold & Reynolds, 2012; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Thus, branding practitioners will need to focus more on investigating how to minimize the presentation of negative changes in country image, which affect consumers' overall brand perceptions more significantly than positive changes. This is especially because we observed that brand credibility and prestige can easily be damaged by downward changes, but can hardly be improved by upward changes. Therefore, the prevention of the original brand image's downgrading seems to be more crucial than growing the brand image to a higher level, based on the findings of this study.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

Although this study provides theoretical and managerial implications, some limitations exist that suggest directions for future research. First, the findings of this study are subject to the common limitations of sampling techniques and experimental designs. Although every selection was made with careful literature review, the data were collected only from college students at selected universities in the United States, who

were primarily female (i.e., 79.6% of the total participants), about two selected countries, Italy and China. Among various cases of discrepancies, the discrepancies between COB, COC, and COM were examined by scenarios of brand choice while controlling other variables, using the four fictional brand names that highly signal the origin country (e.g., *Signolilità* for an Italian brand, *Xiuxianfu* for a Chinese brand, etc.). These selections may hinder the generalization of the findings of this study into the other samples and contexts. For instance, in the market, brands sometimes employ image-making strategies using neutral/foreign brand names (e.g., a Chinese brand using an English name). Future research that compares the outcome of shifting COC and COM by the cases of using native, neutral, and foreign brand names is requested.

Second, this study is also not free from the general limitations of within-subject research designs, such as carryover effects (e.g., practice and fatigue), order effects, unequivalency in time points (gap between before and after measures) across participants, etc. (Greenwald, 1976). To strengthen the findings, follow-up experiments may use more variety in time gaps between measures (Greenwald, 1976). This also pertains to the time factor discussed in the managerial implications. Although changes in the participants' brand evaluations by M&A and offshoring were measured right after reading the scenario in the experiments, in reality, consumers' evaluations might change over time by the other factors, such as, the natural improvement of brand image (i.e., the case of a brand from an emerging market) or the brand's image recovery programs. Future studies may track the changes in brand image over time, thus providing a more holistic understanding of how country image shifts affect brand images in the long-term.

Third, this study did not find a significant moderating effect associated with the variable. This result might be related to the limitation of college student sample; the variation of clothing product involvement level among the students might not be large enough to release difference in their perception about fashion brands' country image transitions by their clothing product involvement levels. As aforementioned, there are other potential variables that could be considered, such as consumers' views about foreign countries, internationalism, patriotism, consumers' involvement level in a particular brand, and the perceived importance of country image-related information over the other fashion brand attributes (e.g., price, design, quality, etc.). Future studies that explore these variables would enable researchers to understand consumer behaviors toward multiple country images more comprehensively.

Further, future studies could also investigate effective post-M&A or post-offshoring brand communication strategies. In regards to the significant downward M&A/offshoring effects on decreasing brand credibility and prestige, potential communication strategies that can minimize or overcome the negative outcomes of downward practices, while also comparing the effects of different strategies, would be a promising topic. Moreover, concerning the non-significant effects of upward M&A and offshoring, a follow-up examination may inquire if there are other strategies that can improve brand images from emerging countries, as well as the extent how much these strategies are effective. These approaches will suggest useful post-M&A/post-offshoring brand image management strategies for brands, especially the ones from inferior fashion image countries who want to overcome the disadvantage of their original country images.

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APPENDIX A

STIMULI

Set 1: With-model

- Luxury brand image & Mass market brand image



Source: Adapted from

- Left: <http://styletotheaislemag.com/style-inspiration-isabeli-fontana-smolders-in-luxe-style/>
- Right: <http://www.dreamstime.com/stock-photo-blank-t-shirt-set-front-back-female-isolated-white-background-image46699015>

Set 2: Without-model (Objects/Store image)

- Luxury brand image, Mass market brand image #1, Mass market brand image #2



Source: Adapted from

- Left: <http://www.creneau.com/work/project/galante-luxury-shoe-store>
- Right: <http://global.rakuten.com/en/store/comame/item/100778/&rct>

APPENDIX B

IRB OFFICIAL LETTER



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY
2718 Beverly Cooper Moore and Irene Mitchell Moore
Humanities and Research Administration Bldg.
PO Box 26170
Greensboro, NC 27402-6170
336.256.0253
Web site: www.uncg.edu/orc
Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #216

To: Hongjoo Woo
Cons, Apparel, and Ret Stds
210 Stone Building

From: UNCG IRB

Date: 1/29/2016

RE: Determination that Research or Research-Like Activity does not require IRB Approval

Study #: 16-0014

Study Title: Multiple country images in a fashion brand: How do those affect consumers' cognitive dissonance and brand perception?

This submission was reviewed by the above-referenced IRB. The IRB has determined that this submission does not constitute human subjects research as defined under federal regulations [45 CFR 46.102 (d or f)] and does not require IRB approval.

Study Description:

Today, fashion brands' original country-of-brand origin (COB) (where the brand originated from) often does not the same with their country-of-company (where the ownership of the brand is) and/or country-of-manufacturing (where the products of the brand are actually made) due to globalization trends. Two business strategies that particularly cause this phenomenon are cross-border M&A (merger & acquisition; the ownership of the brand is purchased by a foreign company) and offshoring strategy (in which the brand takes manufacturing of products to a foreign country). This study explores how consumers react when they notice that a fashion brand is actually owned by a foreign company or produces their products in a foreign country that have different country images with the original country-of-brand origin: for example, when an Italian brand is now owned by a Qatari loyal family or makes their products in China. Specifically, this study examines whether incongruity between the country images of COB, COC, and COM arouse cognitive dissonance among consumers, and how such dissonance affects their perceived brand credibility and prestige. For this, an experimental design online survey is used providing virtual scenarios of fashion brands' cross-border M&A and offshoring and measuring consumers' perceptions about those scenarios.

If your study protocol changes in such a way that this determination will no longer apply, you should contact the above IRB before making the changes.

CC:

Byounggho Jin, Cons, Apparel, and Ret Stds

APPENDIX C

PILOT INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

<Part 1> Image Selection

Set 1: With-model

- Luxury brand image & Mass market brand image



Set 2: Without-model (Objects/Store image)

- Luxury brand image, Mass market brand image #1, Mass market brand image #2



Sample Questions

(for each set)

- How would you tell the difference between these images, and why?
- How does the image on the left differ from the one on the right? Why?
- How does the image on the right differ from the one on the left? Why?

(comparing the two sets)

- Which set of images show a clearer/greater difference? Which set shows more obvious comparison?
- If you need to find images of luxury brands and mass market brands for comparison, which set of images would you choose?
- Which set of images better/clearly describes the difference between luxury brands and mass market brands?

<Part 2> Cognitive Dissonance Scale Validation

Cognitive Dissonance after Reading the Scenarios

e.g. Luxury brand image + cross-border M&A article set

(the same questions were asked for each of the combinations of: Luxury/mass market brand images x cross-border M&A/offshoring newspaper articles)



Sample Questions

- Please see the image of a fashion brand first and then read the newspaper article. How do you feel about the brand's recent practice reported in the article?
- What kind of words/expression would you use to describe the brand's practice reported in the article?
- Do you feel like this brand's recent practice reported in the article has something wrong with it? If so, why and how would you explain the situation?

APPENDIX D

PRE-TEST

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Hongjoo Woo. This is my dissertation research guided by Dr. Byoungcho Jin, the Putman and Hayes Distinguished professor at the UNCG, studying your perception about fashion brands. The respondent for this study is U.S. college students aged 18 and above. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and you will not be compensated for your participation in this study. Your answers will be kept confidential at all times. We hope you answer every questions carefully because incomplete responses cannot be used for further analysis. If you have any questions on the survey, please contact Hongjoo Woo (336.686.0853, h_woo@uncg.edu). This study has been reviewed by IRB (Institutional Review Board), and If you have any questions about IRB you can contact the UNCG IRB office (336.256.1482, <http://compliance.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). I greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,
Hongjoo Woo

<Part 1> Country Selection Validation

1) Italy's Image in the Fashion Product Category (6-item)

Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in Italy for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in Italy are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2) China's Image in the Fashion Product Category (6-item)

Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in China for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in China are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<Part 2> Image Stimuli Validation

1) Luxury brand image



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The given fashion brand looks luxurious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The given fashion brand seems to be upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The products of the given fashion brand would be expensive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2) Mass market brand image



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The given fashion brand looks casual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The given fashion brand seems not to be upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The products of the given fashion brand would be affordable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<Part 3> Scale Validation

1) Brand credibility & Brand prestige scales

Please find the image of Italian luxury brand “*Signorilita*” below, and answer the next questions.



	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2) Cognitive dissonance scale

Below is a newspaper article about the brand *Signorilità*'s recent marketing practice. Please read the text carefully to answer the next questions.



After reading the newspaper article, about this fashion brand's recent practice that is described in the article, how much do you feel each of the following statements, as compared to your perception about the brand before reading the newspaper article?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Despair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hollow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uneasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annoyed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I really need this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder whether I should buy this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3) Clothing product involvement scale

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not at all interested in clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy buying clothes for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothes help me express who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is not part of my self-image.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate your age & gender.

Age: _____ Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX E

PILOT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

- **R: Researcher**
- **1, 2, 3, 4: Participant 1, 2, 3 and 4**

R: Okay. First of all, thank you for your participation. Today we are going to talk about some fashion brands' images. I'm going to ask you guys about your thoughts and opinions about the images. So, there is no right answer or wrong answer. Please feel free to talk about your own opinions based on your perception about the images. So, for the first image, what is your perception about this brand in terms of whether it looks like upscale, or... What do you think about this brand? Target consumers, or price ranges... What is your perception about "estimated" price range of this brand?

(showing the luxury brand image with model)

All: Upscale, yeah.

1: It's a very high-end brand. So it's almost like couture.

2: It looks expensive.

3: It looks like they have a really good quality.

R: So, does it look like for everybody? Or, for a specific group of consumers?

All: No...

2: It looks like it needs a measurement, like couture.

R: Alright. Then let's move on to the next image, a different image. What do you think about this brand? As compared to the previous image?

(showing the mass market brand image with model #1)

2: I think it's cheaper. It looks like ready-to-wear. But also it looks like a nice... the cotton looks like a nice quality rather than just like a really cheap fabric.

4: It looks like something that you can buy anywhere. Just a plain t-shirt.

R: So, does it look like available for everybody?

All: Yeah.

R: Even for us?

All: Yeah. Of course.

R: Okay. What about for students? Do you think it's available for students?

All: Yeah, yes.

3: Probably at the bookstore.

All: (laughing)

R: Then can you think of a store that you can buy this brand?

1: Probably like Walmart...

All: Yeah, Walmart, Target...

1: you can find it probably anywhere, like all designers make t-shirts. Like Target, Walmart, Forever 21...

R: (nodding) Then what's the estimation for the price for this t-shirt?

1: Um, it could range from anywhere like \$5...?

All: (nodding) yeah.

1: Or like \$65, because every designer make t-shirts.

R: Then, what about the previous one? Can you imagine the price of this brand?

1: Probably like \$5,000?

All: (nodding) yeah.

R: Really? At least \$1,000?

2: Yeah. At least \$1,000. A couple thousands dollar.

R: Okay. Then how would you describe the difference between this image (i.e., luxury brand image with model) and this image (i.e., mass market brand image with model #1)?

2: I feel like their customers, like the dress is for more... for her. It fits her more perfectly rather than the t-shirt that is not made of like... measuring her shoulder or anything.

R: So, is it correct that the first brand is not available for everybody, like it's expensive, it's kind of customized, and it's high quality...?

All: (nodding) yeah.

R: However, the next image is available for everybody? Even for students? And you can find it any store, like Walmart, Target, or even bookstore...

All: Yeah.

R: Okay. Then, what about this image?

(showing the mass market brand image with model #2)

2: That's definitely at Walmart (laugh). It doesn't fit for her. Like it's not for a (specific) target market.

R: hmm, just like simply made for everybody.

All: Yeah.

2: Yeah, look at her body. She looks like uncomfortable (laugh). Like the way the sleeves are sticking out, like long and baggy. It just doesn't fit her.

R: So, does it look like even cheaper? Or even more open to every consumers.

All: Yeah, yeah.

R: Compared to this one? (showing the mass market brand image with model #1)

All: Yeah.

2: The other one (i.e., mass market brand image with model #1) is better.

1: Yeah, comparing these two images, for the first one (i.e., luxury brand image with model), you could target the market, or store and stuff. But this one (i.e., mass market brand image with model #2) is just like the Walmart (laugh).

R: Okay, that's a good answer. Then, can you guess about the country-of-origin of this brand? I mean, just based on your imagination.

(showing the luxury brand image with model)

2: Kind of like Italian.

1: Probably like French. Because it looks like a fashion week. Some Italians go to Paris fashion week.

3: And Italian.

2: Looks like a good quality.

R: So it's more like an European brand, kind of upscale...

All: Yeah.

Then what about this one?

(showing the mass market brand image with model #1)

3: American.

2: Yeah probably here, American.

R: Or it can be just any country?

All: (nodding) um-hmm.

R: What about this one then? Like the made-in country, or...

(showing the mass market brand image with model #2)

2: It just makes me think it's made in China. (All nodding) Made as a bunch.

R: Bunch?

2: Yeah.

R: Okay. That's a great answer. So let's move on to some images of objects then, rather than the images of a model with dress. What is your perception about this brand? Let's say this is an image of the store of a brand. Then how would you describe the brand, like the price ranges, consumer targets... as we just discussed for the other images.

(showing the luxury brand image without model)

3: It's like very upscale, there is no clothing racks or anything...

2: And there is a lighting, too.

3: Yeah, it looks clean.

1: High-income, definitely.

4: It looks like one of the stores that you need to make an appointment to go in.

All: (laughing)

R: Like the security guy wearing gloves opens the door...

All: Yeah (laughing).

R: So it does look like upscale, high-end...

All: Yeah.

R: Okay. Then what about this store image? Let's say this is an image of one of the stores of a brand, then how would you describe?

(showing the mass market brand image without model)

2: Well, the wooden hangers are like nice touch to it. But, it doesn't look as high-up as the other brand.

All: (nodding) yeah.

R: Then what kind of stores would be similar with this kind of store images?

3: Like Belk or Dillards...

All: (nodding) yeah.

R: Oh, then it's kind of... not too cheap?

All: Yeah.

R: Then do you think you can find this kind of item (i.e., the mass market brand image with model #1) or this kind of item (i.e., the mass market brand image with model #2) in this store?

3: Maybe the first one...? I don't know, it really depends. Like the t-shirt (i.e., the mass market brand image with model #1) you can rack it up with some nice polos, or...

R: Then in my understanding, it sounds like this (i.e., the mass market brand image with model #1) looks little nicer than just Walmart, or anything like that.

All: Yeah.

R: So, moving on the next part... So these are exactly same two images. One is saying it's an Italian luxury brand, and the other is saying it's a Chinese luxury brand. Do you feel like one is more kind of matching...? Like you feel more comfortable with... How do you feel like? Do you feel like it's matching? The information and the image.

(showing the two luxury brand images with model, having the brand names with "Italian luxury" and "Chinese luxury", respectively)

3: I think the Italian luxury. Just because like... how the building looks like, kind of walls are decorated...

R: So is the second image look like little more surprising? Because it's a Chinese brand?

3: Yeah.

R: Because it's a luxury brand?

1: Yeah, when you put the word like "luxury", it kind of changes everything (laugh). Yeah, but um... the Italian looks better.

2: I feel like it's a Chinese luxury brand. Like the background, and walls are like a Chinese culture. And the way she stands in position. That's what it feels like to me.

R: Okay. So it also makes sense that it's a Chinese brand, because China also might have some luxury brands...?

2: (nodding)

R: Okay. Then... these are the exactly same images. And one is saying it's an "Italian casual brand for everybody" and the other is saying it's a "Chinese casual brand for everybody". So, which one do you think is more like, kind of matching...

2: Just that one (pointing the Chinese casual brand one).

R: Chinese?

2: Yeah. I don't know why, but... (laugh). It's just like something... doesn't look like Italian... even though it's a casual. I just feel that way.

R: Okay. So... comparing like, the one set of images were having models, and the other set has just objects, rather than people. So let's say... Do you think there is a greater difference between the two images (i.e., luxury brand image vs. mass market brand image) in this set (i.e., with-model sets), or in this set (i.e., without-model sets)?

(showing the with-model set and without-model set repetitively)

1: (when the with-model set is shown) yes.

All: um-hmm.

1: Definitely.

R: So the images with model and the dress had more like contrasting images?

All: Yeah.

R: Then, can I ask the reason?

1: In my opinion, it's more like sellable that way? Because I sometimes go online to look at designer clothes and stuff, and they have it on like mannequins rather than just like as it is. So it doesn't look as much as nice until it's on the model, and you're like... Oh, I really want to buy that thing.

R: So, when you look at these images (i.e., without-model set), is it little harder to tell the difference between, like, oh, this is luxury and this is available for everybody? Like, before you look at the model images.

All: (nodding) um-hmm.

R: Then is it because like... even though the stores look like luxury or cheap, some items might be little different... is that right? Is that the reason?

3: Yeah.

2: Yeah, because the items are like, depending on...

R: So you see that there is more clear difference in the model images...

All: um-hmm. Yeah.

R: Okay. So the first part is over, which is really short, and from now I'm going to show you guys some brand images, which are the same images from the previous part. And then I'm going to provide you a newspaper article that is describing the marketing practices of those brands. And I'm going to ask you guys about your opinions, feelings, and thought about those brands' activities. Like how you feel about these recent marketing activities. So, first, this is an Italian luxury brand (showing the luxury brand image with model & Italian brand signal). And then, this is a recent newspaper article.

(showing the scenario: Signolirita's cross-border M&A with Chinese company)

R: If you guys have any questions you can ask me.

(Participants reading)

R: So, can I ask what's the major point of this newspaper article? What was it about?

1: A Chinese company acquired the Italian brand, which happened with that dress (image).

R: Can I ask your feelings right after reading the newspaper article? Like, about the brand...

1: It doesn't really bother me if the quality is the same. If that made something change with that, maybe, yeah.

(silence)

R: So... you just saw that it's an Italian brand. And now you read the article saying it's now owned by a Chinese company, rather than an Italian company.

3: I guess it depends on who they're trying to appeal to. If they're trying to appeal to Italian upper-class women... you know, the look of the dress might be the same, but if you're trying to target Chinese... you know, women... then I think it looks different. I think it's a lot different...

R: Let's say you're a potential consumer who's using this brand. Then after reading this article, do you feel like whether... it's little different, surprising, little disappointing, unexpected, like... How do you feel about that?

2: I think if the brand is still consistent in what they're doing, like the consistent target market, then I wouldn't have any problem with that.

R: Then let's think more in a simple way. Rather than how they're going to do in the future, but let's pay attention to "right now", at the point of just now. So "right after" reading the newspaper, does your image about the brand change a little bit?

All: (silence)

2: I don't think so... I don't... I'd just still buy it (laugh).

R: So the ownership of the company doesn't matter a lot?

All: (silence)

2: Not to me.

R: Or do you feel like it's... lying a little bit. Because before reading this newspaper article you just saw it's an Italian luxury brand, and you didn't know that this is actually owned by China. So let's say they're not sharing this information with consumers. Then how do you feel about it?

2: I would feel like it's lying.

R: Lying?

2: Yeah, because you need to tell the truth. Like, if it's an Italian brand and if a Chinese company is trying to make it as theirs, and like... You should know what's going on instead of trying to cover it up. Because that's a lie to the target market and because, they don't know what they're buying. Like, in one of my apparel classes they teach us to know where it's from, looking at their tags to see where it's from.

R: That's right. Then, I'm going to try to suggest some words that describe your feelings after reading the newspaper. So please just share your thoughts on whether you felt little bit in the similar way, or, you just never felt that way.

All: (nodding)

R: Okay. After reading the newspaper article about that the company ownership is actually in China, while the brand is an Italian brand, then, about this brand I feel... "despair". Do you agree or not?

All: (slowly shaking their heads)

R: Really?

2: I mean, I can understand it but I just don't necessarily feel that way.

R: Okay, let's talk about your thoughts. Rather than other people's thoughts. So, you don't really...?

2: Yeah. Definitely.

R: Okay. Then what about "resent"?

2: I can understand that one.

All: (nodding)

R: "Disappointed".

All: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, disappointed.

R: "Scared".

3: kind-of.

R: kind-of?

All: um-hmm (nodding).

R: "Hollow".

All: (shaking their heads)

R: Not really? Ok. I can actually read your faces.

(All laughing)

R: Okay, "angry".

(All nodding) 3: Yeah.

2: Someone could be angry.

R: "Uneasy".

All: (nodding) yeah.

R: "Down".

All: (tilting their heads) yeah?

R: Not really. Okay. "Annoyed"?

(All nodding) 2: Yeah. I feel that way.

R: Really? "Frustrated".

(All nodding slowly) R: Kind-of? 2: Yeah, kind-of.

R: "Pain".

(All laughing)

R: "Depressed".

All: Nah.... (laughing)

R: "Furious".

(All nodding slowly) 2: Yeah! I can understand that. Especially I don't understand why they're promoting that they're Italian while they're under someone else. I'll be upset about that.

R: And "sick".

(All shaking their heads) No.

R: "Agony".

1: Nah...

R: "I wonder if I really need this brand".

3: Yeah.

1: Some of that...

R: "I wonder whether I should buy this brand".

(All nodding) 2: Yeah.

R: Now we're questionable about the choice of this brand...

(All nodding) um-hmm. Yeah.

R: "I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand".

(All nodding)

R: Okay. "I wonder If I do the right thing in buying this brand".

(All nodding)

R: In a similar way. "About this brand I wonder if I am fooled".

(All nodding) 2: Yeah. 1: um-hmm.

R: "About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line".

(All nodding) um-hmm.

R: "About this brand I wonder if there is something wrong with the deal they provide".

(All nodding) Yeah.

R: Okay. Then can I ask what's the reason that you think that way?

2: Well, because you need to be honest. So I can't really trust what they're telling you so your whole... your thought about the brand, as a whole, changes just because of that one thing.

R: So is it because now it's not clear whether they...

1: Well they should, I feel like they should change their name of it, or, say something about their... "Chinese-owned", so, you don't think you get this Italian-made things, you know.

R: So we should clarify whether...

All: Yeah.

R: Okay. Alright, great answers. Then, this is another newspaper article about the same brand, which is an Italian brand.

(showing the scenario: Signolirita's offshoring practice in China)

(Participants reading)

R: Is it little unexpected? Or like... What about comparing to the earlier newspaper article?

3: It sounds like they're lying the whole time.

All: (laughing)

R: Okay. So, rather than just change of the company ownership, does it more affect your choice of the brand? Does it affect your perception about the brand?

2: Yeah.

All: (nodding)

2: Because we don't know how this is going on. I don't know whether I need to purchase it.

All: um-hmm.

R: So, because it's actually made in China do you think they should lower the price a little bit? Or...

2: I think they don't necessarily lower the price because... the price doesn't necessarily depend on where it's made, but I think they should tell the customers. Like, just tell the customers.

R: Okay. Then what about those feelings that I just described? Like, disappointed, resent, angry, little furious, and I wonder if I really need this brand, or I wonder if there's something wrong with the deal of the brand... Do you feel like these kinds of emotions more strongly? When you know about the made-in country. Compared to the change of the ownership.

1: Yeah, because they put it in a different way. Rather than just like oh, it's a Chinese company and now they're saying it's all made in china, you know? So, yeah.

R: So is it because you think the made-in country affects the product more rather than the company ownership.

3: I think they need to say. You know, in the picture it said... it's an Italian luxury brand. You know, if they say that it might not, but if they still say that it's an Italian made brand then it does affect a lot. You know, well...

2: They should have just told you.

3: Yeah.

R: So, the information is not congruent. It's kind of conflicting each other. Is that correct?

All: Um-hmm. Yeah.

R: Okay. Then, the same image, but let's say this is a Chinese luxury brand. Let's read this article about the brand.

(showing the scenario: Kuochuo's cross-border M&A with Italian company)

R: How do you feel about this information? Does it change a little bit, like your perception about the brand?

2: Not as much as the other one. I don't know why... It just doesn't bother me as much as... the previous one.

R: So, then does it increase the image of the brand...? Now, do you think the brand has more like a positive image because it's owned by an Italian company rather than...

2: Right.

(All nodding)

2: Woo, it's an Italian (laugh).

R: Okay. Then, the next newspaper article.

(showing the scenario: Kuochuo's offshoring practice in Italy)

R: How does this information affect your perception about the brand?

1: I guess it's just because I've seen different, two different things, like I've seen the document the news about "made-in Italy"... So it seems more handcrafted stuff, and there's things made in China, like poor... like labor and stuff like that. It just changes my perception on things, and I feel, now it's being made in... sewed and everything in Italy, it's being... better made.

R: Better made. So now do you expect that this brand has a higher quality? After knowing about 'oh, this is actually made in Italy'.

All: Yeah... yes...

R: Okay, great. Alright, it's almost finished. Let me show this Italian casual brand, which is more like comfortable clothes. And then, this is a newspaper article about the Italian casual brand.

(showing the scenario: LaVestiti's cross-border M&A with Chinese company)

R: So... Was it really surprising? Compared to the luxury brand cases?

All: (tilting their heads) No...

R: Okay, do you think that this doesn't really affect the brand quality and everything that much?

1: Well, honestly, even if it's an Italian made I wouldn't want to buy it 'cuz I don't like the fit of it (laugh). So, it just doesn't bother me as much, but... yeah, that's my own thoughts on that.

R: And the next newspaper article. Basically the similar thing happened.

(showing the scenario: LaVestiti's offshoring practice in China)

R: So was it surprising that this is actually made in China although this is an Italian brand?

All: (shaking their heads) Nah...

2: This is just like... mass produced.

R: Then can I ask the reason why you think that way?

2: It's just... My mind just says 'oh yeah, a lot of stuff is made in China'. Like in these factories, like the things that a bunch of people make at one time, so... but this (image) just reminds me of something that is made in factories rather than it's made handcrafted. So when I saw the Italian one (i.e., luxury brand image) 'oh, there's a lot of effort in it' but for this, I tried to think like this is more of "factories".

R: So, is it because... Let me try to rephrase it a little bit. So the luxury brand is made with really high quality. So it's really surprising, and it's a lot of changes, if it's actually made in China. But because this is just kind of like a little cheaper, kind of t-shirts, it's not really surprising or it doesn't really affect the brand image...

2: Yeah, it's just a t-shirt.

3: Um-hmm, yeah.

R: Either it's made in China, or in Italy...

All: um-hmm.

1: I wouldn't mind as much, honestly.

3: Because you're not paying that much for the t-shirt. You know, you're paying much more that dress (i.e., luxury brand image).

1: Um-hmm.

R: So you expect more...

All: (nodding) Yeah.

R: Okay, great answers. Let's say this is a Chinese casual brand. This newspaper article is about, the company ownership of the brand is actually owned by an Italian investors.

(showing the scenario: Xiuxianfu's cross-border M&A with Italian company)

R: So now, the company is now an Italian company although it's a Chinese brand. Does that affect your image about the brand?

(All tilting their heads)

R: Not really?

All: I don't know,...

1: There's not much work that goes into making a t-shirt, so...

(All nodding with laughs)

1: It doesn't really bother me as much.

R: Then what about this newspaper article?

(showing the scenario: Xiuxianfu's offshoring practice in Italy)

R: Still, it doesn't affect that much, it doesn't change as much...?

All: (shaking their heads) Nah.

R: Then, What... what do you think? What's the reason?

1: I don't know, because it's just so basic and everybody makes it. So it just doesn't really bother me as much. But if you're trying to find something like one-of-a-kind, that kind of... yeah.

R: So, in the situations about the luxury brand, you care more about which country made this, which country has the brand, but you don't really care about... like the made-in country or everything for a piece of t-shirt, because it's just like cheap and available anywhere...

(All nodding) 2: Yeah.

R: Is that the difference between the two cases?

All: Yeah. Yeah.

R: Alright! Great answers, and this is it. This is the end.

(All laughing)

APPENDIX F

STUDY 1 QUESTIONNAIRE

< Luxury Brands' Cross-Border M&A >

Group 1: An Italian luxury brand acquired by a Chinese company

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Hongjoo Woo. This is my dissertation research guided by Dr. Byoungho Jin, the Putman and Hayes Distinguished professor at the UNCG, studying your perception about fashion brands. The respondent for this study is U.S. college students aged 18 and above. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and you will not be compensated for your participation but there are **4 Amazon gift card drawings** you can enter at the end of the survey. Your answers will be kept confidential at all times. **We hope you answer every question carefully** because incomplete responses cannot be used for further analysis. If you have any questions on the survey, please contact Hongjoo Woo (336.686.0853, h_woo@uncg.edu). This study has been reviewed by IRB (Institutional Review Board), and If you have any questions about IRB you can contact the UNCG IRB office (336.256.1482, <http://compliance.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). I greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,
Hongjoo Woo

- Please look at the image below.



- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements about the fashion brand in the image above:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Below is a news article that is recently published in the fashion business magazine. Please read the article carefully.



- After reading the newspaper article, about this fashion brand's recent practice that is described in the article, how much do you feel each of the following statements, as compared to your perception about the brand before reading the newspaper article?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Despair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hollow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uneasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annoyed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I really need this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder whether I should buy this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements, AFTER reading the new article:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not at all interested in clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy buying clothes for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothes help me express who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is not part of my self-image.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in Italy for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in Italy are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in China for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in China are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Age: _____
- Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
- Year: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate

Thank you for your participation!

Group 2: A Chinese luxury brand acquired by an Italian company

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Hongjoo Woo. This is my dissertation research guided by Dr. Byoungjo Jin, the Putman and Hayes Distinguished professor at the UNCG, studying your perception about fashion brands. The respondent for this study is U.S. college students aged 18 and above. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and you will not be compensated for your participation but there are **4 Amazon gift card drawings** you can enter at the end of the survey. Your answers will be kept confidential at all times. **We hope you answer every question carefully** because incomplete responses cannot be used for further analysis. If you have any questions on the survey, please contact Hongjoo Woo (336.686.0853, h_woo@uncg.edu). This study has been reviewed by IRB (Institutional Review Board), and If you have any questions about IRB you can contact the UNCG IRB office (336.256.1482, <http://compliance.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). I greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,
Hongjoo Woo

- Please look at the image below.



- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements about the fashion brand in the image above:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Below is a news article that is recently published in the fashion business magazine. Please read the article carefully.



- After reading the newspaper article, about this fashion brand's recent practice that is described in the article, how much do you feel each of the following statements, as compared to your perception about the brand before reading the newspaper article?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Despair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hollow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uneasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annoyed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I really need this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder whether I should buy this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements, AFTER reading the new article:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not at all interested in clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy buying clothes for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothes help me express who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is not part of my self-image.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in Italy for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in Italy are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in China for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in China are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Age: _____
- Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
- Year: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX G

STUDY 2 QUESTIONNAIRE

< Mass Market Brands' Cross-Border M&A >

Group 1: An Italian mass market brand acquired by a Chinese company

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Hongjoo Woo. This is my dissertation research guided by Dr. Byoungjo Jin, the Putman and Hayes Distinguished professor at the UNCG, studying your perception about fashion brands. The respondent for this study is U.S. college students aged 18 and above. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and you will not be compensated for your participation but there are **4 Amazon gift card drawings** you can enter at the end of the survey. Your answers will be kept confidential at all times. **We hope you answer every question carefully** because incomplete responses cannot be used for further analysis. If you have any questions on the survey, please contact Hongjoo Woo (336.686.0853, h_woo@uncg.edu). This study has been reviewed by IRB (Institutional Review Board), and If you have any questions about IRB you can contact the UNCG IRB office (336.256.1482, <http://compliance.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). I greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,
Hongjoo Woo

- Please look at the image below.



- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements about the fashion brand in the image above:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Below is a news article that is recently published in the fashion business magazine. Please read the article carefully.



- After reading the newspaper article, about this fashion brand's recent practice that is described in the article, how much do you feel each of the following statements, as compared to your perception about the brand before reading the newspaper article?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Despair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hollow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uneasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annoyed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I really need this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder whether I should buy this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements, AFTER reading the new article:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not at all interested in clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy buying clothes for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothes help me express who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is not part of my self-image.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in Italy for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in Italy are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in China for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in China are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Age: _____
- Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
- Year: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate

Thank you for your participation!

Group 2: A Chinese mass market brand acquired by an Italian company

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Hongjoo Woo. This is my dissertation research guided by Dr. Byoungcho Jin, the Putman and Hayes Distinguished professor at the UNCG, studying your perception about fashion brands. The respondent for this study is U.S. college students aged 18 and above. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and you will not be compensated for your participation but there are **4 Amazon gift card drawings** you can enter at the end of the survey. Your answers will be kept confidential at all times. **We hope you answer every question carefully** because incomplete responses cannot be used for further analysis. If you have any questions on the survey, please contact Hongjoo Woo (336.686.0853, h_woo@uncg.edu). This study has been reviewed by IRB (Institutional Review Board), and If you have any questions about IRB you can contact the UNCG IRB office (336.256.1482, <http://compliance.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). I greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,
Hongjoo Woo

- Please look at the image below.



- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements about the fashion brand in the image above:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Below is a news article that is recently published in the fashion business magazine. Please read the article carefully.



- After reading the newspaper article, about this fashion brand's recent practice that is described in the article, how much do you feel each of the following statements, as compared to your perception about the brand before reading the newspaper article?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Despair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hollow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uneasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annoyed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I really need this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder whether I should buy this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements, AFTER reading the new article:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not at all interested in clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy buying clothes for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothes help me express who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is not part of my self-image.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in Italy for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in Italy are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in China for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in China are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Age: _____
- Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
- Year: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX H

STUDY 3 QUESTIONNAIRE

< **Luxury Brands' Offshoring** >

Group 1: An Italian luxury brand made in China

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Hongjoo Woo. This is my dissertation research guided by Dr. Byoungjo Jin, the Putman and Hayes Distinguished professor at the UNCG, studying your perception about fashion brands. The respondent for this study is U.S. college students aged 18 and above. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and you will not be compensated for your participation but there are **4 Amazon gift card drawings** you can enter at the end of the survey. Your answers will be kept confidential at all times. **We hope you answer every question carefully** because incomplete responses cannot be used for further analysis. If you have any questions on the survey, please contact Hongjoo Woo (336.686.0853, h_woo@uncg.edu). This study has been reviewed by IRB (Institutional Review Board), and If you have any questions about IRB you can contact the UNCG IRB office (336.256.1482, <http://compliance.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). I greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,
Hongjoo Woo

- Please look at the image below.



- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements about the fashion brand in the image above:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Below is a news article that is recently published in the fashion business magazine. Please read the article carefully.



- After reading the newspaper article, about this fashion brand's recent practice that is described in the article, how much do you feel each of the following statements, as compared to your perception about the brand before reading the newspaper article?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Despair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hollow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uneasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annoyed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I really need this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder whether I should buy this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements, AFTER reading the new article:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not at all interested in clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy buying clothes for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothes help me express who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is not part of my self-image.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in Italy for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in Italy are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in China for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in China are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Age: _____
- Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
- Year: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate

Thank you for your participation!

Group 2: A Chinese luxury brand products made in Italy

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Hongjoo Woo. This is my dissertation research guided by Dr. Byoungjo Jin, the Putman and Hayes Distinguished professor at the UNCG, studying your perception about fashion brands. The respondent for this study is U.S. college students aged 18 and above. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and you will not be compensated for your participation but there are **4 Amazon gift card drawings** you can enter at the end of the survey. Your answers will be kept confidential at all times. **We hope you answer every question carefully** because incomplete responses cannot be used for further analysis. If you have any questions on the survey, please contact Hongjoo Woo (336.686.0853, h_woo@uncg.edu). This study has been reviewed by IRB (Institutional Review Board), and If you have any questions about IRB you can contact the UNCG IRB office (336.256.1482, <http://compliance.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). I greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,
Hongjoo Woo

- Please look at the image below.



- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements about the fashion brand in the image above:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Below is a news article that is recently published in the fashion business magazine. Please read the article carefully.



- After reading the newspaper article, about this fashion brand's recent practice that is described in the article, how much do you feel each of the following statements, as compared to your perception about the brand before reading the newspaper article?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Despair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hollow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uneasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annoyed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I really need this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder whether I should buy this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements, AFTER reading the new article:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not at all interested in clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy buying clothes for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothes help me express who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is not part of my self-image.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in Italy for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in Italy are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in China for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in China are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Age: _____
- Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
- Year: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX I

STUDY 4 QUESTIONNAIRE

< Mass Market Brands' Offshoring >

Group 1: An Italian mass market brand made in China

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Hongjoo Woo. This is my dissertation research guided by Dr. Byoungjo Jin, the Putman and Hayes Distinguished professor at the UNCG, studying your perception about fashion brands. The respondent for this study is U.S. college students aged 18 and above. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and you will not be compensated for your participation but there are **4 Amazon gift card drawings** you can enter at the end of the survey. Your answers will be kept confidential at all times. **We hope you answer every question carefully** because incomplete responses cannot be used for further analysis. If you have any questions on the survey, please contact Hongjoo Woo (336.686.0853, h_woo@uncg.edu). This study has been reviewed by IRB (Institutional Review Board), and If you have any questions about IRB you can contact the UNCG IRB office (336.256.1482, <http://compliance.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). I greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,
Hongjoo Woo

- Please look at the image below.



- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements about the fashion brand in the image above:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Below is a news article that is recently published in the fashion business magazine. Please read the article carefully.



- After reading the newspaper article, about this fashion brand's recent practice that is described in the article, how much do you feel each of the following statements, as compared to your perception about the brand before reading the newspaper article?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Despair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hollow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uneasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annoyed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I really need this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder whether I should buy this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements, AFTER reading the new article:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not at all interested in clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy buying clothes for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothes help me express who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is not part of my self-image.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in Italy for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in Italy are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in China for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in China are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Age: _____
- Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
- Year: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate

Thank you for your participation!

Group 2: A Chinese mass market brand products made in Italy

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Hongjoo Woo. This is my dissertation research guided by Dr. ByoungHo Jin, the Putman and Hayes Distinguished professor at the UNCG, studying your perception about fashion brands. The respondent for this study is U.S. college students aged 18 and above. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and you will not be compensated for your participation but there are **4 Amazon gift card drawings** you can enter at the end of the survey. Your answers will be kept confidential at all times. **We hope you answer every question carefully** because incomplete responses cannot be used for further analysis. If you have any questions on the survey, please contact Hongjoo Woo (336.686.0853, h_woo@uncg.edu). This study has been reviewed by IRB (Institutional Review Board), and If you have any questions about IRB you can contact the UNCG IRB office (336.256.1482, <http://compliance.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). I greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,
Hongjoo Woo

- Please look at the image below.



- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements about the fashion brand in the image above:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Below is a news article that is recently published in the fashion business magazine. Please read the article carefully.



- After reading the newspaper article, about this fashion brand's recent practice that is described in the article, how much do you feel each of the following statements, as compared to your perception about the brand before reading the newspaper article?

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Despair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hollow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uneasy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annoyed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agony	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I really need this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder whether I should buy this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I make the right choice buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wonder if I do the right thing in buying this brand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if I am fooled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder if they spin me a line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
About this brand I wonder whether there is something wrong with the deal they provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements, AFTER reading the new article:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand would deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product claims from this brand would be believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect this brand to keep its promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would be committed to delivering on its claims.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has a name you can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand would have the ability to deliver what it promises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand has high status.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This brand is very upscale.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not at all interested in clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I attach great importance to the way people are dressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I enjoy buying clothes for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothes help me express who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing is not part of my self-image.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in Italy for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in Italy are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from Italy are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a long tradition in China for making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in China are very experienced at making fashion products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are overall superior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are a good choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are better than similar products from other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fashion products from China are of high quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Age: _____
- Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
- Year: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate

Thank you for your participation!